



Real Religion

HOWARD ALLEN BRIDGMAN



BV 4501 .B733 1910
Bridgman, Howard Allen, 186
-1929.
Real religion

REAL RELIGION

REAL RELIGION

FRIENDLY TALKS TO THE AVERAGE MAN
ON CLEAN AND USEFUL LIVING

BY

HOWARD ALLEN BRIDGMAN

Author of "*Steps Christward*"



THE PILGRIM PRESS

BOSTON

NEW YORK

CHICAGO

Copyright, 1910
BY LUTHER H. CARY

THE · PLIMPTON · PRESS
[W · D · O]
NORWOOD · MASS · U · S · A

To
MY CHILDREN



CONTENTS

	PAGE
A STRAIGHT WORD ON RELIGION	I
"ONE WORLD AT A TIME"	5
THE LUCK OF THE ROAD	9
THE FIRST THOUGHTS ON WAKING	14
TROLLEY-CAR THEOLOGY	18
"AS GOOD AS THE AVERAGE"	22
"THAT LITTLE STREAK OF RELIGION"	25
TO ONE SOURED ON LIFE	30
THE FUN OF BEGINNING AGAIN	34
THE CONTAGION OF GOOD CHEER	38
THE LARGE IN THE LITTLE	42
RUNNING BY THE SIGNALS	46
THE BURIED LIFE	50
THE DRUMMER'S SUNDAY	54
FIXED IDEAS'	58
"AFTER YOU, PLEASE"	62
"SHE COULD, SHE WOULD, SHE DID"	65
"BE SOMEBODY"	69
"HOW IS BUSINESS?"	72
OFF DAYS	76
"SAME OLD JOB"	80
THE COURAGE TO PART WITH THINGS	84
LIFE ON EASY STREET	88
THE STANDSTILLS OF LIFE	92
SNAP JUDGMENTS	95
THE ART OF APPRECIATION	99
OUR HUMAN ISLANDS	102
THE RESERVES IN HUMAN NATURE	107
THE GOOD LISTENER	111
HUMAN BEINGS AS LINKS	115

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ONE GOOD LIFE	119
A MAN AND HIS ECHO	123
THE MOTHER'S PART	127
ALL HAIL TO THE BREADWINNER	131
"FOND OF HIS FOLKS"	135
A HOME-MAKER	138
WHAT SHALL THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN DO?	142
THIS NEXT WEEK'S FRIENDLINESS	146
WHEN IS A MAN OLD?	149
WHY GO TO CHURCH?	154
THE QUESTION WHY	158
WHERE DO PEOPLE GO WHEN THEY DIE?	162
THE ONE-LEGGED BOY'S THANKFULNESS	166
THE GOOD-WILL COMPANY UNLIMITED	170
THE MAN WHO CAME BACK	174
THE CHARM OF THE IMPOSSIBLE	178
THE MAN YOU MIGHT BE	182

FOREWORD

THIS is not a book for scholars, though the author hopes that his construing of religion is not at variance with scholarship. Neither is it a book for saints; yet if any of its words shall strengthen their serene and tested faith, the author will be glad. It is a book for the man and the woman in the midst of the moral struggle, exposed to the materialism and the pessimism of our age. And it comes from one who would have them regard him, not as an ethical teacher or a spiritual adviser, but as their fellow soldier and their friend.

REAL RELIGION

A STRAIGHT WORD ON RELIGION

THE swift passing of the years can hardly fail to make us thoughtful. What does it all mean — this rapid flight of time? Is there any clue to the mystery? Long as life may be, in the case of any of us, it is short at best. Seventy, eighty, even ninety years are a brief span compared with the sweep of eternity. If there is anything certain in this uncertain world it is that we shall not be here long. The vast majority of us will speedily be forgotten. Is there anything that can give dignity and significance to these transient years?

Only one answer to this question has satisfied the heart of man. Religion alone, personal religion, gives meaning and glory to life; and the irreligious man, whatever else he may be, honest, kind, generous, fails to grasp life's real riches. I am not speaking now of one religion as distinct from another or of the fine distinctions within the

REAL RELIGION

pale of a given religion, say Christianity. I have in mind rather the religious spirit which underlies all religious forms and which often unites those whose outward observances are quite unlike even though they ignore this inner tie. So when I urge a man to be religious I do not ask him first of all to accept my creed or attend my church. I bid him rather connect his life, as he will, with that great force called religion, which he already knows is the secret of the world's progress and the power behind the lives of the best men and women whom the world has ever known. Two or three things I deem to be essential.

You must submit your life to this higher power. You must trust and obey it. The heart of religion is some form of submission. You must confess that you are not strong or wise enough to go alone. You must put your ambitions, your hopes, your capacities in the keeping of one worthy to be trusted and loved and served. In other words, you must become a child again and lean hard upon a strength and wisdom that are not your own. There is only one class of persons who can never be truly religious. They are the proud and the self-sufficient.

A STRAIGHT WORD

You must pray. You must cultivate an intimacy with this higher power. Your prayers need not be long or conventional, but they ought to be frequent and genuine. No matter if praying comes hard at first, persist and the practise will be easier and increasingly rewarding. Don't stop to theorize or philosophize on the subject, but learn to speak to God as simply and as naturally as children talk to their parents. Not all your prayers will be answered. As you keep on praying you will care less and less for that, but prayer persisted in brings its own assurance that it pays to pray, that a man is not wasting his breath, but is communing with the Almighty.

One thing more. The religious mood depends for its sustenance also on the right kind of food. There is a book which looms far above all other books in its power to inform and kindle the spirit of man as he seeks to have commerce with his Creator. I do not claim for the Bible every merit which some of its too zealous friends claim, but I am sure that it is essential to the building up and perfecting of the religious life.

Such are some of the basal elements of personal religion. Why not, my friend,

REAL RELIGION

have a religion of your own? Why wait till everything is explained? Why be discouraged because you started a long time ago and failed?

“ONE WORLD AT A TIME”

“**H**E is one of those fellows who believes in only one world at a time,” commented a sagacious, elderly man upon a youth of marked ability who is, nevertheless, an out and out agnostic. No Epicurean of old ever took more pains to tickle his palate or to please his esthetic sensibilities. His conception of this world where he will probably stay a few years longer is that of an orange from which he should extract all possible savory nutriment, and to which he is under no obligation to contribute anything that makes for its uplift.

There are a good many of them — these one-world-at-a-time fellows — and on the surface there is much to justify them in the attitude they take. This is a very good world, a vital, rich, throbbing world which responds in a wonderful number of ways to our craving for sensuous gratification. Science and invention are multiplying constantly the devices that add to our ease and comfort. We have but to press the

REAL RELIGION

button and clever mechanisms do the rest. Moreover we have outgrown the old-fashioned notion that we have no right to the wholesome pleasures which this world yields. We have ceased to tell young people that they are not to delight themselves in ordinary recreations lest their soul should be in danger of perdition. In the first place, young people wouldn't believe it if we told them so, and in the second place, it isn't true. The Bible itself says: "He hath made every thing beautiful in its time." "God giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

At the same time, that theory of life which would limit it to interest in things seen and tangible breaks down at certain points. It does not help us in the moral struggle when our better natures assert themselves and would rise above the things that drag us down to earth. Furthermore, we tire at times of incessant rounds of pleasure. Even brownstone mansions and six thousand dollar touring cars cannot satisfy certain moods of our minds.

Again, we cannot shut out the other world if we would. As the poet says, "It lies around us like a cloud." Something happens to bring it very near. There is

“ONE WORLD AT A TIME”

a death in the family or on the street, or our own physical powers begin to decline.

“We long for household faces gone,
For vanished forms we long.”

At such times the theory that there is only one world for us becomes almost intolerable. We look around and see those who have succeeded in dwelling in both worlds, to whom one is almost as real as the other, who while taking the true delight in books, music, painting, travel, human fellowship, and even in good things to eat and good things to wear, find also an even higher satisfaction in the things which the eye does not see nor the hand touch. They honestly believe that they are denizens of two worlds and that they lose a great deal out of their lives when they confine themselves to one.

Sometime even the one-world-at-a-time men may wake up and find themselves woefully mistaken. We are not forecasting their plight then, but it is folly to try to wall out here and now the world of spiritual realities. The one-world-at-a-time people may not suffer hereafter in just the way the stiff theologies have affirmed they would, but how strange that country must seem

REAL RELIGION

to them when they reach it, having made no preparation for it while here. Certainly if one were going to Europe sometime he would, if possible, make some preparation for it. He would occasionally read a book that tells about it, or talk with somebody who had been there, or let his mind in imagination some quiet Sunday evening roam toward that delectable country which he hoped to see some day. Then, when he went, he would not be altogether dazed or find the atmosphere too rare for him, or show himself at every turn in the journey a novice or an ignoramus.

THE LUCK OF THE ROAD

IN that charming novel entitled "Felicity," and depicting the modern stage and the life of the people who figure on it, the phrase "The luck of the road" again and again appears. It is frequently on the lips of the hero of the book, the Old Man, and he always uses it to cheer the members of his company when they get down in the mouth. His point was that having accepted the romantic and uncertain life of their profession they should not whine over its "outs," but should rather exhibit a soldierly spirit and extract all the comfort and pleasure they could out of even hard experiences and situations. And this genial philosophy governed the Old Man not only in relation to his troupe, but in his dealings with all whom he met.

Perhaps a theater can sometimes teach the pulpit a lesson. At any rate, there is a deal of gospel sense in this view of life. For we are all "up against it" in one way and another. Whether we go abroad or stay at home, whether we work for ourselves

REAL RELIGION

or work for others, whether we wear broad-cloth or homespun, we are all amenable to the luck of the road. If we have chosen a profession or trade, there will be some inevitable limitations and drawbacks connected with it. If we have married a wife or husband, perhaps he or she will be one or two notches short of perfection. If we have centered all our hopes on some beautiful expectation it may fail us; or, if not, the reality may fall far below the anticipation. And before we know it, we will be in the mood of the little girl who moaned, "The world is hollow. My doll is made of sawdust, and I want to be a nun."

But is that the right spirit in which to meet life as it comes to us? Isn't it far better to accept the luck of the road, rather than to kick against it? It may help us to submission to remember that our case is never so exceptional as it seems. We all get in the habit of looking at our woes through the end of the telescope that magnifies them; and then we reverse the instrument and look at other folks' troubles, and how small they seem! But get down to the heart of that well-gowned lady of society, that prosperous business man, and maybe

LUCK OF THE ROAD

his luck will seem as hard as yours. The longer I live, the more I am impressed with the universality of discipline and sorrow. If it doesn't come in one form, it usually comes in another. The skies may be fair day after day, but depend upon it, the clouds will come and very few people indeed are able to live out many years and never have to look back upon loss, disappointment, pain, and hardship.

It helps us also to look for the relieving features which are seldom absent from any experience. Standing on the front of a car the other night, I overheard a motor-man complaining about his luck—that it was all the one way and that a bad way. “Well, my friend,” I remarked, “you look in mighty good physical condition. I envy you your physique and brawn.” “Yes,” he admitted, “I have hardly had a sick day in my life.” “Are you married?” “Yes, only a few months ago.” “And you have a pretty good job?” “Yes, I have stuck to it six years.” “Well,” said I, “a man with health, home, and work isn't so badly off after all.” And then I thought of another carman whom I know, whose wife has been in the insane asylum for

REAL RELIGION

several years, and whose children have all died, and yet who never fails to wear a cheerful countenance, and I said to myself, "How tremendously men differ in the way in which they take their luck!"

And one reason for the difference lies in the attitude they have toward other people's hard luck. Lend a hand to the fellow who is a little worse off than you, and you will find yourself taking a much more cheerful view of your own luck. When we begin to be helpers of individual human beings and cease being critics of the universe in general a brighter era in our own personal history begins.

The people who down deep in their hearts believe that a good strong hand holds the helm of this universe are the ones who complain least over what happens. Away with the idea that the miscellaneous events of each passing day that are fraught with sorrow or joy for all mankind simply happen. Let's side with the man who cried out of his experience of harder luck than most of us have ever known, "All things work together for good to them that love God." And let's side with that greater Man who saw into the heart of things when he said,

LUCK OF THE ROAD

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit.”

THE FIRST THOUGHTS ON WAKING

A FATHER of my acquaintance makes it a point to be at the bedside of his little three-year-old boy as soon as he wakes every morning, and in the father's absence the mother is there. The idea is that the touch of the parent's love and interest upon the child as he comes back to consciousness after sleep is far better than that of a hired servant and is likely to prove of great and permanent worth in the child's development.

Back of this instance of fatherly forethought is the fundamental principle that it is important for any one to start the day in the right mood. Who of us older people does not feel the need of some such sweetening and steadying influence at the outset of each new day? Too often the cares of yesterday come trooping back as we slowly emerge from dreamland, and if some vexing problem must be dealt with during the next twenty-four hours, how quickly that comes before us also. If we could only secure, before the plunge into the whirlpool of

THOUGHTS ON WAKING

activities, just a few minutes of happy, inspiring thoughts, what a difference it would make in the entire day!

Our parents cannot long secure this desirable mood for us, but our own wills, if resolute enough, can do much to induce it. Determine first of all that your waking thought shall not relate to yesterday's troubles and failures, but to today's opportunities. The former have passed into history. They were hard enough to bear at the moment. Why should we let them continue to dog us? Susan Coolidge has written nothing sweeter than the poem commencing,

"Every day is a new beginning,
Every morn is the world made new."

Send the thoughts forward then to all the chances of happiness and growth which the new day is sure to bring. O glorious new day, fresh from its Maker's hand, all golden with possibilities, as yet unscarred by our shortcomings! O glorious new day, we hail thee and rejoice that we are permitted to make our record cleaner and fairer.

Let us think, too, of the goodness and not of the meannesses of our fellow men. If we have rubbed up against cranky individuals, if our lot is to be cast with those who thwart

REAL RELIGION

and fret us, let us put over against such human annoyances those pure and noble lives with which we also may come in contact from day to day. Be thankful on waking that this old world still holds so many persons of this type. We may not this day touch many of them, but just to know that they are somewhere in the world radiating constantly truth and virtue ought to inspire us as we rub our eyes, struggle into our clothes, and face again the old routine.

And our waking thoughts ought surely to include some recognition of the divine protection and guidance that constantly surround our lives. Phillips Brooks once voiced his wonder as to how men could come back from unconsciousness to the world of action without sending their thoughts upward to the source of all life and blessing. Some families still maintain the beautiful custom either at breakfast-table or elsewhere of joining in some simple act of worship. In view of all the risks and exposures to which every one is subject every day of his life, and in view of the limitations of one's strength and wisdom, it seems only natural and right to claim the care and leadership of a power, unseen but real, that holds all

THOUGHTS ON WAKING

humanity in its grasp. There is a little prayer of Robert Louis Stevenson's which suits itself to the break of day and which, if said honestly by any one, is sure to make the waking moments peaceful and happy:

"The day returns and brings us the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. Help us to play the man. Help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces. Let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us to go blithely on our business all this day. Bring us to our resting beds weary and content and undishonored. And grant us in the end the gift of sleep."

TROLLEY-CAR THEOLOGY

JAMMED together on the front of an electric car the other afternoon four of us, mainly strangers to one another, struck up an informal conversation. We were homeward bound, and the labors of the day being over, and the anticipations of the evening being keen, we were disposed to a little more familiarity than had we been headed toward our tasks at the day's beginning. But even then the conversation took a somewhat unexpected turn.

One of the men had asked me about a certain mutual acquaintance, and I had told him of her prostration by paralysis. "What," said he, "has that saint been called upon to pass under the harrow? Why, I supposed she was so ripe for heaven, so free from blemish that she would go as Enoch or Elijah did, without suffering any of the disagreeable processes of decay and death."

"Yes," I rejoined, "least of all women whom I know does she seem to need disciplining at the hands of Providence. It's pretty hard to explain mysteries of this

TROLLEY-CAR THEOLOGY

sort. In fact, we need another world to right up the many injustices that we witness here." My interlocutor — who is an elderly man, and somewhat sad faced — went on to say that the most undeserving here seem often to experience most in the way of sorrow and hardship, while as to the other world he said, "We don't know anything about that, for no one has ever come back from it."

A period of silence followed this mournful observation which was broken by the motor-man's bold assertion, "One man has come back."

"Pretty good for the motor-man," said the fourth member of our group, a jolly fellow in early middle life, and I at once took it upon me to support the motor-man's contention, saying, "Yes, indeed, I do believe that one man came back, and that the world has not clung to that belief for nineteen centuries in vain," at which the jolly stranger said, "Sure enough, it can't be that all that is best in civilization and art and human life is built on a mere dream."

The elderly cynic, while not disputing the proposition, began to comment upon the unsatisfactoriness and queerness of this

REAL RELIGION

human world. "Three quarters of the inhabitants of the globe," said he, "have a desperately hard time to get along; they have scarcely enough to eat and to wear, while the other quarter have enough and to spare, and some of them more than enough." But the jovial member of the quartet would not let such a remark as that go unchallenged. He burst out with this ejaculation, "It's a bully world." Whereat I ventured to say, "Well, it's as good a world as any of us ever got into," and the motor-man said, "That's so."

By this time we were nearing the transfer station and the group began to scatter, the motor-man remarking in his cheery Irish brogue, as we said good night to him and to one another, "This has been a very interestin' conversation."

As I went up the street to my own dwelling, I mused how there on the front of the car the chief problems of theology had focused themselves. We four men, together for half an hour by pure accident, had in our talk reflected what is going on in the minds of people everywhere today when once they stop to think and lay bare to one another their inmost convictions. We

TROLLEY-CAR THEOLOGY

were certainly a typical modern group. There was the cynic and the pessimist, a man who, as I happen to know, had acquired a good deal of property, but who looked forward to old age with foreboding and uncertainty of mind. There was the jolly, forward-looking optimist, who refused to be disheartened even by the painful facts of life, and there, too, was the plain man of the people, readier than any of us in the group to profess his unstudied, but confident faith that "Once a man came back."

I shall not soon forget that talk on the front platform. It gave me hope touching the underlying soundness of the great majority of men in the essentials of the faith, and the words that will echo longest in my mind are these: "There was once a man who came back" and "This is a bully world."

“AS GOOD AS THE AVERAGE”

“**I**’M no saint, but I’m as good as the average.” How frequently a man says this, either to appease his own conscience or to justify in the eyes of others his behavior. On the lips of many men it may be a true assertion, but when you come to think the matter through, is it really worth saying? Is it any kind of a compliment?

If your health is no better than that of the average man it is nothing to boast of, for most persons have ailments or physical defects of one sort or another, and if you are no more prosperous than the average man you are certainly far from being well off. Do not the statistics tell us that a very large per cent of the men who go into business for themselves eventually have to make an assignment to their creditors? The average man today is likely to be hard up; he is probably more than ready for his wages or income the moment they are due. Quite likely he hardly makes both ends meet. Nor is the average man’s knowledge very extensive or very accurate, and when

“GOOD AS THE AVERAGE”

one comes to the field of morals, I heard some one, who said he was conversant with the situation, declare positively that the average man in the grocery business today is dishonest. Just why he instanced the grocery business as over against boots and shoes or stocks I cannot tell, unless it be that in the first mentioned pursuit it is so easy to sand the sugar or water the molasses.

I think this far too severe an estimate, for the average man is not so unworthy a representative of our common humanity but we ought to be ashamed to set him up and compare ourselves with him, not aiming to surpass him in any particular. What he ought to be ambitious for is to bring up the general average of mankind. That means that we must be exceptional men, for there will always be enough to lower the average, and it behooves us to live and labor on a little higher plane than the average fellow.

A standard was introduced into this world nineteen hundred years ago which ought to shame the man who runs to cover under the plea, “I’m as good as the average.” It set up a lofty but by no means an im-

REAL RELIGION

possible criterion of conduct. "Don't be satisfied with doing good to those who treat you squarely, but do good to the people who are mean and hateful to you. Give not merely even measure, but press down the contents of the basket and even let it run over. Go two miles with a man rather than one if he needs and wants you." It is this doctrine of excess, of extra service, of exceptional goodness that gives glory to human life. In it are wrapped up all the possibilities of noble character. Indeed, a man can hardly be said to have entered at all into the struggle for character who does not, at least faintly, apprehend the fact that he is called to be, not an average, but an exceptional man.

"Are you afraid to die?" asked a friend of a very sick man. "No," was the reply, "but I am ashamed to die." "Why?" "Because I haven't been a first-class Christian."

If we really see life as it is, life as it may become, we shall never again dodge the issue by saying lightly, "I'm as good as the average." Let us rather make it our solemn aim to be, with divine help, a little better than the average man, to walk a little more erectly, to handle our finances

“GOOD AS THE AVERAGE”

a little more honorably and wisely, to acquire more useful information, and, without ever appearing self-righteous, to be exceptionally pure and true and helpful and magnanimous.

“THAT LITTLE STREAK OF RELIGION”

A CHORUS girl who had encountered hard luck went to a minister for sympathy and help. Now the men and women of the stage do not, as a rule, when in trouble resort immediately to a clergyman. But this particular one was known far and wide for his great tenderness of heart and his sympathy with the weak, distressed, and tempted. He received the actress graciously, as he always received his callers. He showed such quick understanding of her situation and he appealed with such tact to her better nature that suddenly the girl said, “Well, I do believe there is a little streak of religion in me after all, though it is buried way out of sight.” It might have been years since she had given the subject any consideration, but now an exigency had arisen which made her aware that the deepest thing in her nature was the religious element. Not all her triumphs and not all her failures on the stage had extinguished within her this vital spark.

“THAT LITTLE STREAK”

Yet hers was no abnormal experience. Religion is in the inheritance of most of us and in the training of many of us. Many a man in middle life will tell you that he was brought up to go to church or Sunday-school. Even if he has become utterly indifferent, he cannot altogether shake off the influence of the prayer he used to offer at his mother's knee or of the Bible that had a place of honor in his early home or of his personal interest in religion in former times. Said such a man to a chance acquaintance the other day, "I used to be a professor, but I don't believe in God any more or in a hereafter. But there is one thing that troubles me. I have a little daughter and I can't teach her any more such nonsense as 'Now I lay me down to sleep' — so what can I tell her?" "Tell her," replied the other man, himself a bluff but sincere believer, "tell her to go to the devil, for she is likely to go that way with you believing as you do." Drastic counsel was this, but it is sometimes necessary to give a jolt to the man who is so cock-sure of his infidelity that he forgets his own past and forgets that which is best and deepest in his own nature.

REAL RELIGION

For religion is in our very blood. Talk about religion perishing from off the face of the earth! When men cease to appreciate the masterpieces of art, when noble music finds in them no response, when a lovely landscape fails to elicit their admiration, when they are not susceptible to the appeal of friendship, then and not till then will they give up their religion. And not even then, for the religious instinct is a deeper and more inalienable part of the human endowment than is the capacity to appreciate music or art or poetry or nature. Religion is in the blood of the Caucasian and the African, of the Christian and the Moham-medan, of the Jew and the Parsee. Indeed there is sometimes more genuine religion in a follower of a so-called heathen religion than in some nominal Christians.

We are not talking now about forms and creeds, about denominations and isms. We are talking of that which underlies all expression, and our appeal is not in the interests of any one religion as of religion pure and simple. It is not for me to dictate what form your religion shall take, but simply to suggest that "the little streak of religion" in us needs to be brought under influences

“THAT LITTLE STREAK”

that make for its strengthening and illumination, and to be put to work in the field of our daily activities and relationships.

Why should any of us wait until he has hard luck, until he is reduced to some desperate situation, before he discerns and confesses that he cannot rid himself, that he would not rid himself, of his religious instinct? Why not at once decide to give it more constant recognition and larger scope?

TO ONE SOURED ON LIFE

“**W**HAT can a man do who has become soured on life?” That question opens the door into a great subject, for despite the fact that Americans have the reputation of being the happiest and most buoyant people of the world, the number of those wholly or partly soured on life is larger than is at first supposed. They may not have gone so far as to contemplate throwing themselves into the nearest river, or taking a dose of strychnine. They are hardly ready to present themselves for treatment at any anti-suicide bureau; but the sweetness and charm of life have practically vanished for them and they radiate gloom instead of sunshine as they go about the world. They have adopted a slower form of suicide. What word may be spoken to these individuals here and there that shall incite them to make one more desperate try for happiness?

It ought to be a word of sympathy first of all. Quite likely you have been unjustly treated. Some supposed friend has gone

TO ONE SOURED ON LIFE

back on you. Circumstances over which you seem to have had no control have cramped your life. Your "luck," if you choose to call it that, has been harder than that of your neighbor. But does it all justify you in settling down to despair? Our question is not what others can do for you, but what you can do, and my first appeal must be to your will-power. Maybe you need a kind of electric shock to summon up the forces of personal life that ought to assert themselves in a man, even though things have gone awry with him.

Maybe, too, your ideas need some reconstruction. If your preconceived program of life has included naught but pleasurable experiences; if you have grown up thinking that you ought to be exempt from pain, disappointment, reverses, shabby treatment by others — then it is high time that you got a larger view of the universe; a higher ideal of existence than that of sitting in easy chairs and sipping nectar from golden cups. Not to have any hard knocks means flabby, not virile, manhood. You hardly know what life in its totality is until you have had some encounter with sorrow, loss, or disappointment. But your sense of re-

REAL RELIGION

action from these things is evidence that life is meant to be joyous in spite of trial. Now go one step further and believe that life is meant to be more joyous for you because of your afflictions, and set yourself resolutely to discovering the good at the heart of the evil.

Try the nature cure. Go out these fine spring days and watch the clouds floating over the sky. Bare your head to the breezes sweet with the suggestion of flowers. Take delight in the bewitching greenery with which shrubs and trees and meadows are adorning themselves. A bright spring morning is a splendid antidote for the sour spirit.

Try service. Somebody is worse off than you. Find him out and seek to alleviate his lot. Yes, you can do it even if you aren't a city missionary or a social settlement worker, or even if you think you have no knack for cheering others up. Try and you will be surprised how that faculty of bearing other people's burdens, when once put at work, strengthens.

Try faith. But you haven't any, you say. Oh, yes, there is a good big residuum of faith even in your skeptical mind and your downcast heart. Cling to it. Nourish it

TO ONE SOURED ON LIFE

by putting it in contact with others who are trying to walk by faith. Believe with all your might what you do believe and your faith will grow.

It ought to be good-bye from this day forward to the sour spirit, for the gift of existence is too precious a one to fritter away or despise under any circumstances. I know a man who remarks to his friends as he comes in to dinner every night, often after a hard and trying day, "The world's a great go, isn't it?" Yes, he is right, even this world with all its aches and pains is a "great go," and if you will say over to yourself every morning on arising the little verse that follows, I am ready to guarantee that you will cease to be soured on life:

"How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!"

THE FUN OF BEGINNING AGAIN

SOON after the San Francisco earthquake, a distinguished physician of that city, having journeyed to another part of the land, was telling a group of friends about the disaster. He dwelt chiefly upon what had befallen others, and it was only incidentally that his hearers learned that he had himself lost his splendid medical library and many cases of valuable surgical instruments, while his professional practise had been reduced to an almost non-paying basis. When the members of the group began to commiserate him on his personal losses, he cheerfully remarked, "Oh, never mind about them! I shall have the fun of beginning again."

Such tests as these come to some men like a stroke out of the clear sky. The artist completes a picture over which he has toiled long, and lo! some miscreant or some careless person daubs it in a way that forever destroys its beauty. The successful business man is betrayed by some trusted associate, and lo! the earnings of years

FUN OF BEGINNING AGAIN

are suddenly dissipated. Now, under such circumstances, how do men behave? How many of them see the fun of beginning again? Most of us can point to personal acquaintances, who may have failed disastrously in business, but who refused to be downed. Today they have recovered, or even exceeded their former prosperity. Adversity acted as a splendid spur. They felt the joyous tingle of starting in afresh, and proving that they could succeed even after the world had passed the superficial verdict that they had failed.

But aside from special tragic disasters, is it not true that every one engaged in business or professional life must in the ordinary courses of that life learn to appreciate the fun of beginning again? Otherwise they get into ruts, and as some one has wittily said, "There is a difference of only one letter between 'groove' and 'grave.'" It certainly behooves all of us frequently to prod ourselves, even when we think we are going ahead fairly well, with the question, "Am I doing my best? If I were starting in anew today on my career, would I not display more inventiveness, perseverance, enthusiasm than I am exhibiting now?"

REAL RELIGION

This is the way in which men get to the top of the ladder. With the apostle Paul, they say to themselves every morning, "Not as though I had already attained."

Not less necessary is it in the field of daily human relationships to be alive to the fun of beginning again. The friction, the misunderstandings, the collisions that mar many a home, would be obviated if the members of the family circle conceived of their contact day by day as a chance to better the attitude and behavior of yesterday. Even kind and wise parents may grow in kindness and in wisdom. Of course, if one thinks he knows it all, there is no hope for such a conceited parent; but if he is eager to discharge his parental duties in a way that will forever put the stamp of an earnest personality upon plastic children, then he will say to himself every morning, "Fatherhood is a blessed responsibility. I don't feel as if I had mastered the fine art. I am going to see today if I can't begin all over again." By night-time the children will notice the difference and be saying to one another, "What has got into father?"

Would that children, too, might sometime start on a new tack with reference to their

FUN OF BEGINNING AGAIN

parents. It is not viciousness but thoughtlessness that makes them forgetful of the delicate courtesies which make any home an Eden. Maybe these lines will fall under the eye of some son away from home, or some daughter, who ought, before sleeping tonight, to make glad the heart of a distant parent by a loving filial letter. So, around the entire circle of relationships, how much better we all should do if we were sufficiently conscious of our past failures and sufficiently aware of our potentialities to be willing to say to ourselves, "I am going to begin all over again and see if I can't live with this or that person more happily and effectively."

And there is one even higher relationship in reference to which we ought to find the joy of beginning anew. We have made a poor fist of religion, many of us. Perhaps we have acquired just enough to make us miserable, but never mind; we can begin over again tomorrow, today. And even if we have failed once, twice, or thrice, we can make a success of it for all time to come. We can if we only think we can.

THE CONTAGION OF GOOD CHEER

“CAN a person be cheerful even if he is not happy?” asked a bright young woman the other day. “And ought he to feign cheerfulness when he is at heart unhappy?” Now this particular young woman is one of the most constantly cheerful persons I ever knew. It seems as if it were as easy and natural for her to be sunny faced from morn till eve as for a good many of the rest of us to be glum. And yet she leads a rather monotonous life, most of her time and strength being given to the care of two lively and sometimes exacting little children. But her question made me think for the first time that what those about her have always considered a rare natural gift may be not a matter of temperament only, but of patient cultivation also. We see only the beautiful product. She alone and God know the self-discipline and the struggle. And though there may be times when she has to feign happiness, I really think that she has come into the possession of more than the ordinary person’s share of the genuine article.

GOOD CHEER

And so I would say, "If you can't be happy, seem to be happy, and the chances are that you will soon be really happy." At least we can imitate the man who early in life established the rule that he would force himself to be happy until ten o'clock in the morning. If he succeeded up to that point, the problem took care of itself usually for the rest of the day. There was once a man of whom the dwellers in the same house said that he always came down to breakfast looking as if he had just inherited a fortune.

One reason why children are so charming is that they are happy, as a rule. A merry child in a household radiates good cheer. An English poet speaks of a glad and winsome child as

"A silver stream
Breaking with laughter from the lake divine
Whence all things flow."

Why should a man or woman outgrow this mood of good cheer? The crucial question is, What kind of a front will we show to the world? Ought it not to be, for our own sakes, an attitude of hope and cheer? It is good for a man every now and then to shake himself free from the things that depress and annoy him and say resolutely,

REAL RELIGION

“Uncertain as is the way before me, unpleasant as are my surroundings, difficult as is my problem, I refuse to let the difficulties and irritations sour my spirit, spoil all my good times, blind me to the glories of earth and sea and sky, deaden me to the simple delights of every day, the music of children’s laughter, the solace of great books, the blessings of friendship, the splendid achievements of the men and women who are helping the world, or finally and chiefly to the eternal goodness of God the Father Almighty.”

Such an attitude is of incalculable value to the man himself. Think, too, what it means to others. I worked once in an office with a young man of moderate abilities, but who was the incarnation of sunshine. The more brilliant men there were respected, but he was loved by all from manager to office boy, and when he left to take another position there was a general feeling of loss and of gloom. Coming out of a restaurant last week my companion called my attention to the young man who helps people find seats and remarked, “He’ll be President some day.” “Why?” I asked. “Because he is always so pleasant,” was the reply.

GOOD CHEER

I came across this new beatitude recently with which I close, "Blessed are the cheer makers, for they shall be called sons of the morning."

THE LARGE IN THE LITTLE

“**H**E had gained a capacity for getting great and far-reaching happiness from the exquisite little joys of life.” Thus the hero of a short story in one of our current magazines is characterized by the author, and what a splendid thing it is to be able to say that either of a man in a story or a man in real life. When you have reached the point where you do not need a rare piece of good fortune or a trip to Europe or a unique relationship to the great and mighty of the earth to make you happy you have mastered the secret of contented and fruitful living. When the play of the sunshine across your desk, the laughter of a little child, the cheery greeting of a friend who meets and passes you in the crowd, a page out of a new book, or any one of the comparatively trifling experiences which befall you between sunrise and sunset can make you deeply and unfeignedly happy you can bid defiance to all the black bats of fear and trouble which hover about your daily pathway.

LARGE IN THE LITTLE

The little things that together comprise the life of a single day ought to yield us joy. In the same story from which I have quoted the author refers to the great happiness which comes "from the blessed continuance of the unnoticed daily good." Whenever the routine looks bare and tedious to us let us think how we should feel if something interposed to bring it to a sharp conclusion. If some illness or disability prevents one from going to his daily task, how he yearns for a return to the former routine. Pray, is it nothing to you that you arose this morning in health, that you can take up your duties in the full possession of your reason, that you have some honest, profitable work to do in God's great working world? The other day a well-known American authoress was burned out. But instead of crying over the catastrophe she wrote as follows: "I lost nearly everything — priceless books, all my note-books of years of work. Well, to be alive and well is good."

One can harvest, too, a crop of joys by being responsive to the beauty and order of the universe in which we live. An elevator boy said the other day, "I ought to be thankful that as my car moves from

REAL RELIGION

floor to floor I can get such frequent glimpses of the sunshine and the sky." How foolish we are to fail to notice the loveliness of tiny things in nature, the blending of colors in the violet, the glory of a single star, the thrilling song which the little bird pours forth. You can connect with many of these sources of joy without hardly stirring from your tracks, only there must be the ear to listen, the eye to see, the mind to appreciate, but if you are absorbed in the fluctuations of the stock market or the perplexities of housekeeping you are likely to pass them all by as too small for consideration.

The loves of our life may make us profoundly happy and true love expresses itself in a hundred little ways. What you really love about your little boy is not merely the man that you see he is going to be by and by, but the fact that he toddles toward the door the moment he hears your key in the lock and gives an exultant shout when he feels your arms about him. The man who postpones the pleasure that he is to get out of his kinship and friendship to the time when he can sit down and take in fully and scientifically the dimensions of that love makes a vital mistake. Learn to enjoy

LARGE IN THE LITTLE

your children, your home, and your friends as you go along.

And it is marvelous, too, how the little services for others react and pour a flood of joy into your life. That is the delight of doing something for the child — a penny present often counts for as much in his eyes as a ten thousand dollar check. And people generally are helped more than you realize by a small offering on your part provided your heart goes with it. And the moment that we realize how we have served another's need, another fountain of happiness is opened in our own hearts.

God put us in this world to be happy. Philosophers have fought over the proposition whether virtue or happiness is the main end of living, but no system of ethics leaves us any right to be gloomy, and even that stiff old theological document known as the Westminster Catechism affirms that one of the chief ends of men is to enjoy God forever. But if we are going to enjoy God and heaven by and by we must establish at once here a habit of forcing little things to yield us their proper meed of delight.

RUNNING BY THE SIGNALS

NO railroad accidents are more lamentable or inexcusable than those arising from neglect of signals. For as our systems are organized today each trainman is supposed to know what each green light and each red light and every other warning device means, and upon his prompt and thorough obedience depend the lives and property of those who have entrusted themselves to the railway companies for safe transportation. And when a man, either through carelessness or wilfulness, disregards a signal he nullifies the proper working out of a carefully planned schedule and often brings terrible consequences upon himself, and others.

We are all quick to condemn the recreant engineer or switchman, but when it comes to the sphere of our own lives we daily run by the signals with hardly a thought of what we are doing. The course of life resembles a railroad track. We start at a given point and are headed toward the terminus at the other end of the line, but

RUNNING BY SIGNALS

as we rush along how numerous are the chances for derailment and disaster! Yet as we speed forward, there are placed along the track at certain intervals warning and admonishing signals. We are told when to slow up and when to quicken our pace and when to halt altogether. There is one class of signals for children and another for young men and young women and another for persons in middle life and still another for the aged, but no period of life is without its signals.

The warnings that relate to our physical well-being are many and constant. The baby toddles up to the stove, puts its fingers on the hot cover, and cries out with pain. And that experience serves as a signal to remind the child perhaps for all time that stoves with fires in them are always hot and are always to be let alone. Through the limbs and bodies of older people dart now and then significant pains or they find themselves sleepless at night or craving strong stimulants or are irritable and fretful. Signals they are which nature, overdriven or neglected, hangs out to tell us that we are doing violence to our bodies, which are something more than so much muscle,

REAL RELIGION

bone, and tissue. They are veritable temples of the Holy Spirit. The signals mean that it is time to slow up, to reconstruct our methods, to consider whether we are doing the fair thing by ourselves in point of diet, exercise, and rest.

As we mingle with our fellow men we get a variety of helpful signals that if heeded may lead us to a stricter watch upon habits and actions. An unexpectedly large bill comes in. Your feeling of irritation is perhaps the token that you are living beyond your means or are too socially ambitious. Somebody jokes you about your fondness for somebody else's wife. It's only a joke made in good temper, and yet it sets you thinking and you become more circumspect.

What signals does a man get from time to time touching the state and prospects of his soul? Some Sunday morning your little child comes to you and says, "Papa, why don't you ever go to church with us?" The blunt question rather startles you, and instead of answering her directly you repeat the question silently to yourself. Or maybe you are a churchgoer, but the sermons and the hallowed associations fail to touch and inspire you as they used to do. It is pos-

RUNNING BY SIGNALS

sible that the minister is becoming dull, but it is more likely that your mind is so crusted over with schemes for getting rich that the arrow from the preacher's quiver cannot pierce to the spot where you really live. Nothing is more pathetic in human life than the increasing insensibility of many men absorbed in business and pleasure to the appeal of higher interests, their unsusceptibility to the higher forms of literature, music, and art, their indifference to Jesus Christ.

But in the gracious ordering of life there are signals all along the way. And they mean that One is trying to communicate with us who has more knowledge than we and who wants to help us avoid pitfalls and snares. He knows the track ahead of us as we cannot know it, and he would save us from plunging headlong to wreck and ruin.

THE BURIED LIFE

But often in the world's most crowded streets,
But often in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.

THUS Matthew Arnold depicts the yearning which now and then comes to a man for an earlier mood, a former attitude, a lost experience vanished, but not forgotten — for the moment out of reach, but not altogether irrecoverable.

What have you done with the best part of you, my friend? Perhaps you do not realize the fact, but you have practically dug a grave and deposited therein the thing that was finest and purest in you. Upon it, as the years have come and gone, you have spread layer after layer of interest in lesser matters, and now that former self is stifling for breath.

There was a time when the sweet and simple satisfaction of the home meant a good deal to you; when you would shorten your luncheon-hour in order that you might get home in season to toss the baby in your

THE BURIED LIFE

arms, or to have a romp with the children, or to spend the first half-hour after supper in reading some profitable book with your wife. But as the cares of this world have thickened, and the deceitfulness of riches and the struggle for them have grown upon you, the home-seeking and home-making instinct has become dulled in you. You aim still to furnish the means of support for the family and to make them as ample as possible, but your children miss the direct touch of your personality upon them, your wife longs for the old, happy, close comradeship, and children and wife both are beginning to show to others the lack of just such an influence as the father and husband alone can bring.

Do you remember the time when the sound of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," or "The Star Spangled Banner," played by a marching band thrilled you to the fingertips? Citizenship meant a great deal to you in those days. You did not care simply to play the game of politics and to get your share of the offices, but you did work hard to get the right men into office, to keep the standard of public service high, to serve the nation, the state, the community

REAL RELIGION

in ways accessible to you, because you believed that patriotism means not simply going to war in behalf of native land, but in times of peace, vigilance and attention to the prosaic details that make for the welfare of the people, that keep the water system pure, the schools and libraries up to par, the moral atmosphere free from harmful elements. But somehow you have today lost all interest in practical or theoretical politics. Caucus night finds you at home instead of at the booth. You take a rather pessimistic view of politics in general. It is too "nasty" for you to soil your hands with.

Religion once had a charm for you. It seemed to offer an explanation of the mysteries of this life; it furnished inspiration for manly living day by day. You felt the contagion of noble lives lived under the influence of religion and rejoiced to feel yourself part of that noble company who

"Through life's long days of strife
Still chant their morning song,"

but the zest and power of religion have somehow disappeared. Not merely that you have ceased going to church regularly, or if you go you do so perfunctorily, but

THE BURIED LIFE

you are aware that the fires of a sensitive, religious experience no longer glow.

Too bad, indeed, is it that these varied types of buried life exist all about us. Those rare, beautiful growths of other years needed to be tended and not to be choked, and it is not their fault that they have been merely suffocated by "other things entering in" and choking them. But it is not too late to resurrect them. The spring is here again. A great many things that we thought were dead are now awakening to new life. You can never be sure that what you thought had gone forever is beyond reviving. Give that which was best and still is best in you a fresh chance. Remove the layers of worldliness, selfishness, pride, ambition that weigh down upon the buried life. Give it light and air and a fair chance and see how wondrously beautiful and strong it yet can become.

THE DRUMMER'S SUNDAY

MY professional duties involve the spending of a Sunday occasionally in a hotel in some unfamiliar city or town. Invariably I find myself in the companionship of a number of traveling men. Agreeable, straightforward gentlemen these "drummers" are, and many an interesting and profitable talk I have had with them at table or in the lobby. These knights of the gripsack carry keen eyes. They know this country well and human nature still better, and they have a racy way of setting forth their observations and opinions.

I watch with special interest to see how they observe Sunday. Very few of them fail to differentiate it from week-days. Some of them keep it as strictly as I do myself. But in the case of the majority perhaps this is about the program: a late rising and a sauntering into the dining-room for breakfast about as late as the law permits, then the Sunday papers with a cigar and a chat consume most of the hours until dinner. And when that substantial meal is over another cigar, some more conversation, quite

THE DRUMMER'S SUNDAY

likely a nap or a walk or both, and before the day ends, a budget of letters, almost invariably one to "the house" reporting last week's business, while in all probability the route for the coming days has to be sketched out and notifications sent on ahead. So the day slips by with a mixture of rest and business and pleasure and off they go Sunday night or Monday morning to "green fields and pastures new," which means in plain prose to warehouses, shops and factories, and the everlasting effort to sell, sell, sell.

My first feeling with regard to these enterprising fellows is one of pity for their enforced and often prolonged absence from home. Some of them get used to it and some of them do not, and the latter, I think, are less to be pitied than the former. Once in a while I see a drummer detach himself from a group of fellow travelers and make for the long-distance telephone booth. In due time he emerges with a fond and happy look in his eyes, for he has been saying good night to the youngsters perhaps two hundred miles away and has been listening to the voice of the woman whom he most loves to hear speak.

REAL RELIGION

Blessed be the long-distance telephone! It has saved many a homesick man from utter despair, but it is rather expensive, and in lieu of that a good fat letter started homeward on Sunday will not only bless its recipients, but react helpfully on the writer. No drummer ought to omit this. And he ought to try to make it as breezy and hopeful as possible, for hard as it is to be away from his dearest ones, it is no less hard for the "little woman" who stays by the stuff and perhaps for the "kiddies" too.

And how about getting out the Bible from the gripsack? Only the other Saturday night I was delighted to hear a group of traveling men in a hotel corridor talking, not politics or football, but telling each other what they thought about the Bible. Several were brave enough to declare their belief that it contained a vast amount of sound sense. "What a wonderful leader and statesman Moses was," remarked one in the group. "Yes," chimed in another. "And that man Solomon knew what he was talking about when he wrote the Proverbs." He who thinks the Bible an uninteresting and outworn book is profoundly ignorant, and if you want something that will make your

THE DRUMMER'S SUNDAY

Sundays brighter and better just get out your old Bible and start in almost anywhere.

Church? Well, we don't know about that. But some traveling men do go and they wouldn't give up the habit for anything. They will even sacrifice an hour or two in bed for it. Enterprising churches post notices in hotel lobbies or send personal invitations to traveling men, but even if the churches are sleepy you can get good from public worship and the chances are that if you will go half-way you will find a cordial welcome. A friend of mine, a drummer, was sitting one Sunday afternoon in a western hotel and suddenly he burst out with this remark, "Boys, let's all go to church to-night." The word was passed around and by seven o'clock twenty-five men filed out of the front door and made their way to the nearest church. What a sensation they created as they were ushered to the best seats on the broad aisle! When the contribution-box came around each man, by previous agreement, put in a dollar bill. They haven't even now stopped talking in that church about those drummers and their wonderful and inspiring visit.

FIXED IDEAS

WE are hearing frequently today of "fixed ideas." The term usually has an unpleasant savor. It stands for certain unfortunate notions that take possession of men's minds and hold them captive. Doctors and ministers are constantly thrown in contact with people thus unhappily obsessed. A clergyman told me the other day that a man had been to him to try and get relief from the thought that the spirit of a certain dead drunkard had gotten hold of him. Other nervous sufferers brood over this or that real or fancied trouble. This man, who now has money in the bank, is sure that he is going to die in the poorhouse. That woman thinks her husband has stopped loving her. That man grieves over a sin committed twenty years ago.

The usual method of treating these victims of painful fixed ideas is to try and inject into the mind a counter-irritant in the form of some cheerful, hope-laden thought, trusting that it will in time drive out the evil spirits. May it not be a good plan for all of us before

FIXED IDEAS

we become neurasthenics and while we are in a normal physical and mental condition to establish in our minds certain ideas of such positive strength and worth that they will preempt every nook and cranny and make it impossible for malign and distressing thoughts to find entrance, much less lodgment?

Now we do not have to manufacture such ideas or to search far and wide for them. We need not start an independent intellectual factory and store it with notions purely of our own production, that will not bear the test of the world's scrutiny. We have but to recognize and accept what has approved itself to the judgment of the centuries, what at the bar of reason today stands forth as the truest and finest thought that the human mind can cherish. Some glorious ideas may be said to be fixed in the thinking of mankind; not that every individual holds them tenaciously, but that they are widely and increasingly current and that they are held most strongly by the prophets, the poets, and the moral leaders of the race.

The intrinsic worth of goodness is a fixed idea. Men almost universally recognize the sharp line between good and evil. They be-

REAL RELIGION

lieve that the clean, straight life is vastly to be preferred to its opposite. They have come to agree with the great English preacher, Frederick W. Robertson, when he says: "Were there no God and no future life, even then, it would be better to be true than to be false, to be pure than to be impure, to be generous than to be selfish." Wild horses cannot drag from the mind of man the idea that goodness is the great, the supreme test of human life.

The idea of immortality has also fixed itself in the thinking of mankind. We revolt from the materialism that regards death as extinction of personality. Whenever we lay our dead away, it is with the confident hope that they have not been resolved into nothingness. When we look forward to our own certain end we believe that it will be but the beginning of an ampler existence. Prove it we cannot. It is enough to feel that "we are mightier than we know."

Another fixed idea is the idea of God. It is vastly harder to believe in no God at all than to believe in some kind of a God. Without him the universe is unintelligible, and human life a mystery and a mockery.

FIXED IDEAS

You may burn men at the stake, you may strip them of all their possessions, but you cannot keep them from believing in God.

The preeminence of Jesus Christ is still another fixed idea. However theories of his person may differ, the modern world is practically at one in its appreciation of the character of Jesus and of the bearing of his teachings and example on all our modern problems. Science and invention register great advances from year to year, but Jesus retains his mastership of the race.

Such are a few of the ideas that cling to countless human minds the world over. Why not fix them firmly in our own thinking and act upon them?

“AFTER YOU, PLEASE”

IT sometimes requires the services of an expert to determine whether a piece of furniture is genuine mahogany or ordinary wood overlaid with a handsome veneer. Neither is it always easy, from casual acquaintance, to decide whether politeness in a certain individual is real or superficial. But time will tell. I knew two men in college, one of whom was the most popular fellow in his class, and the other one of the most unpopular, but both were exceedingly deferential and considerate in the presence of others. In the one case, however, the politeness was the natural outflowing of a refined and unselfish character as spontaneous and beautiful as the blush upon the peach, while in the other case the politeness appeared to be simply a means toward the accomplishment of a selfish end, a species of toadyism by virtue of which he hoped to get the entrée into certain circles. But in the long run he lost the favor which he courted, as a man always does who tries to ride into popularity on his gentlemanly manners alone.

“AFTER YOU, PLEASE”

We on this side the water, with our democratic traditions, are inclined to look upon customs in other countries as mere empty formalism. Passing out of a Paris restaurant one day I noticed how my companion, a Parisian, lifted his hat to the lady cashier. “I do it,” he explained, “not because she is a lady, but because I am a gentleman.” I couldn’t help wondering whether it would not be better to be a trifle less polite and a little more truly regardful of the feminine sex. And as between the suave manner with a flinty heart and the brusque manner with the kind heart, give me every time the latter.

But need a man be brusque in order to be genuine? By no means. Let us get back to the tap-root of politeness, which is a good heart. Starting with that, let a man cultivate the amenities and civilities. Few of us are as considerate as we ought to be of the rights and claims of others. In how many homes is politeness at a minimum! When company comes you brush up your manners for a day or two, but when the company departs you forget all about “Thank you” and “If you please.” You keep the easy chair in the parlor when

REAL RELIGION

your mother or sister comes in. You dare not be anything else but civil to a comparative stranger, but you are hardly decent to your dearest ones. So, too, in business circles. Some proprietors enter their stores or their offices without so much as a pleasant "good morning" to office boy or stenographer.

"After you, please" — what a world of hidden meaning there is in this little phrase which we take so lightly upon our lips. It means, when we think it through, that we have made the great renunciation, that we have really chosen to give others precedence, that we are willing to follow and not to set the pace, that we are content to be second or third or even fourth. Are we ready to undergo such a personal shrinkage? Of one who came nineteen hundred years ago, not to be ministered unto but to minister, it was said in later time, "Jesus Christ was the only perfect gentleman that ever lived."

“SHE COULD, SHE WOULD, SHE
DID”

I NEVER happened to meet the woman on whose tombstone was carved this epitaph, but I have met her counterpart many times. And it may profit us all to pause a moment and reflect upon the meaning of such a summing up of a life career. How simple such a characterization is, how unconventional, how different from the ones which appear with almost wearisome monotony in every churchyard. And yet how adequate it is, too, how inclusive and beautiful. To be able to utter these six words about any man or woman whose life race is run is as much of a compliment as a large volume of glowing praise. Capacity, willingness, action; when those three traits are properly blended you cannot fail to get a strong, fruitful character. And almost all the tragedies in human life, almost all the mistakes and blunders are due to the absence of one or more of these qualities or to their being faultily related to one another.

“She could.” There was capacity, to begin

with. It may be that she possessed wealth or uncommon mental gifts. More likely she had a fund of hope and faith and love. At any rate she had innate ability; but was she any exception to the rest of us? Every mother's son of us possesses some ability, and if we are going to do anything with our lives we must discern what it is, take its dimensions, realize its value. Self-distrust is as much of an impediment to progress as self-conceit. "Oh, I can't." How often that depressing phrase is on the lips of people who really know better. Everybody can do something and be something. There is a vast deal of unused good material buried in many a man's nature simply because he has not courage to mine for it and bring it out into the open. Hundreds of persons may be able to do any number of things better than you can, but there is at least one thing and perhaps more that you can do as well as any one else and probably better than a good many others.

"She would." Capacity was yoked with willingness in this woman's case. "I will try" represented her attitude through life. When people came to her to gain her help in some worthy undertaking, they did not

"SHE COULD, WOULD, DID"

have to break down a great wall of reluctance. She was ready to take the responsible post assigned her, to give of her substance, her time, her ingenuity, for the welfare of others. How many desirable reforms would be accomplished, how much faster the chariot of progress would advance, how many struggling little enterprises would gain a solid underpinning, if the people who could help them were only willing to do their part. Oh, cultivate the willing, compliant, and not the demurring, objecting disposition.

"She did." Ah, there is the fruitage of it all. The world wants people who do things. Many capable and willing individuals stop just short of performance. They possess ability, they are full of kindly intentions, but somehow the letter of sympathy never gets written, the call upon some forlorn person never gets made, the means of personal culture close at hand is never actually laid hold of. So golden days pass away with nothing tangible accomplished. So long ago as the first century there lived a woman by the name of Dorcas, who we have reason to believe was not brilliant intellectually or conspicuous socially, but her fame has lived through the centuries, because, as

the account of her life says, she was "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." She was handy with her needle and her friends and neighbors profited constantly by the garments which she made and distributed generously to those who had need of them. Many of us are full of good works which we never do, which we intend to do tomorrow or next week, but this Dorcas of the first century clung to her intentions till they became realized facts, and therefore she is fitly characterized as "full of good works which she did." There is a little touch of irony in those last three words which ought to make us twinge, when our actual performance comes far short of what we have purposed.

A good ideal for a man's life is this: To measure your capacity for efficient work, to cultivate a willing spirit, and then to go ahead and do something. Is not that the secret of a happy, earnest life, not overbusy, but serene, steady, and fruitful?

“BE SOMEBODY”

THIS laconic injunction caught my eye the other day. It was the first headline of a bold-faced advertisement proclaiming the advantages of a certain school of correspondence. It offered attractive courses in engineering, architecture, electricity, and a number of other branches of learning, and the inducement held forth was that it does not pay to settle down lazily in a minor position when by gaining more information one's services would command a higher salary. I can imagine that such an advertisement would appeal powerfully to many young men. It suggests a differentiation of oneself from the common herd, a striking out boldly with the hope and expectation of amounting to something. The nobodies are all about us. Some of them are amiable, well-meaning persons. But they lack ginger and go. Negative, colorless they are when the world wants men of conviction, men of action.

Not so were the men who have really contributed something to humanity. “Be

somebody" whispered a voice in the ears of Tyndale early in the sixteenth century, and he set his teeth and said, "If God spares my life I will make it possible for any plow-boy in England to read the Bible in his own tongue." "Be somebody" was the bugle-call a century ago to Samuel J. Mills, the American pioneer of the modern missionary movement, and he wrote in his diary, "No young man ought to think of living without trying to make his influence felt around the globe." "Be somebody" said the inward monitor to Frances Willard, and out of her brain and heart came the splendid development of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. "Be somebody" was the terse command that spurred William Booth on to organize the Salvation Army.

And thus, time after time, to the country lad hoeing his father's corn, to the city clerk not content with being a mere drudge, to the society maiden weary of her gayeties, to the middle-aged man conscious that there is yet another chance before the night closes in upon him, has come this incisive voice bidding the one addressed cease being "anybody" or "nobody" and rise to the dignity of "somebody."

“BE SOMEBODY”

It is a noble command. We are meant to be somebodies, to count for all we are worth, to play the game through fairly and vigorously and never be quitters or shirks. The manager of a great corporation said recently that he sought for men to become agents of his company who could impress their individuality upon those with whom the concern did business so that they would not think of it as an abstract entity, but would personify it in the faces and figures of its cheery, whole-souled drummers. To-day, as of yore when conditions were far simpler, people like to do business, not with a tremendous affair known as the Amalgamated Hair Pin Company Limited, but with Jones and Smith and Brown.

If we cannot be somebody in the eyes of the big world we can be within a limited area. We can be somebody to our children, our friends, our neighbors, our church associates. The secret is first to build ourselves up in the finest graces and virtues and then to expend them lavishly on others.

“HOW IS BUSINESS?”

HOW is business? This is the great American question. Watch two men accost each other. “How are you?” “How is your family?” “Do you think it is going to rain?” These are likely to be the first questions, but usually they are in the nature of a polite introduction to the one theme in which both are most interested. All over the land this question is being asked all day long. No solicitude for any statesman or celebrated author who may be ill is quite so keen as the popular desire that this great intangible, semi-personal concern of mankind known as business shall suffer no fluctuations of health. Wars are looked upon as a menace to commerce, and therefore organizations of business men express themselves in favor of universal peace. Political campaigns are dreaded lest they should lower the barometer of trade. Prolonged and bitter strikes are disapproved of, not, perhaps, primarily because of the sufferings they entail upon those most concerned, but because sooner or later they may affect general business.

“HOW IS BUSINESS?”

It is no sign that a man is entirely commercialized because he asks this question instinctively. The Book of books has many good words for the man who is not slothful, but diligent in his business. It goes so far as to say that such a man shall stand before kings. An age characterized by business activity is far in advance of one marked by the barbaric occupations of hunting, fishing, and fighting. The world gets on largely because of the volume of business done in it day by day. That sooner or later gives rise to the refinements and adornments of civilization. Stagnation in business would mean a lessening of libraries and museums, colleges and churches. Business is, indeed, a divinely ordained function for the great majority of mankind, and millions of men are to work out their salvation and wield their influence in the world as they stand faithful to their duties in offices, shops, banking institutions, and manufacturing concerns.

But when this question circumscribes the whole horizon of a man's life, it means that he is daily becoming narrow and sordid. He may be adding to his invested funds, but he is growing insensitive to all the higher

concerns of human life, to music, to art, to literature, to friendship, and to the public service. That was the kind of business man Phillips Brooks had in mind once when, in a little fit of impatience, he said, "I declare, I have never met a business man whom I thoroughly liked."

Certainly, the business man who is nothing but a business man, who, from the time he rises to the time he retires, thinks of nothing but business, is to be pitied. When he has made his pile and is ready to retire, he will find that certain sides of his nature have become atrophied. He may go to Europe on his own private yacht, but all the picture galleries and beautiful churches and natural glories of the Old World will fail to move him as they would have done if he had not so entirely concentrated all his energies upon the making of money.

Fortunate is the man who, while ambitious and diligent along business lines, does not close all the chambers of his soul to other interests, to the prattle of little children at play, to the movement of the stars in the heavens, to the nourishing words of preacher and poet, to those institutions which represent altruism and make for the

public weal. Perhaps he will not amass quite as great wealth, but he will be tenfold larger and nobler when he is seventy years old. Wordsworth is right when he sings:

“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!”

And Charles Dickens, in his immortal *Christmas Carol*, represents the stingy Scrooge brought to a knowledge of his meanness by the ghost of his former partner, Marley. To justify himself Scrooge says in faltering tones, “But you were always such a good man of business, Jacob.” To which the ghost replies in words that ought to sink into all our minds, “Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

OFF DAYS

“**H**E is a pretty good fellow, but he has his off days” was the comment of one of his friends regarding a railroad man well known in his community. We all know him, or at least men like him. To-day they are agreeable, obliging, approachable, altogether delightful. Tomorrow they are as acid as vinegar, and as sullen as an ill-tempered dog. Just what has happened to justify or explain the transformation, no observer possesses discernment enough to tell, and, in fact, nothing, in the way of ill tidings or unpleasant experiences has befallen them. Through some unaccountable reason they are simply passing through an off day. And it is not grown people alone who are victims of the malady. Have we not known the dearest children in the world to be one day perfectly angelic and twenty-four hours thereafter perfectly anarchistic in temper and behavior? They, too, by some subtle process, which orthodox people would ascribe to the workings of an evil spirit, have undergone a transformation similar to

OFF DAYS

that which made Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde.

Now the victims of off days are not to be harshly judged, and those of us who are more staid of temperament, who do not know what it is to jump in an instant from a mood of exultation to one of depression, who get up in the morning and go through our routine duties without feeling any special uplift or any special sag, should be patient with our differently constituted brethren and sisters. They really suffer from their occasional off days more than anybody who associates with them suffers. If, sometimes, they seem to rise higher than the rest of us in point of enthusiasm and joy, they sink lower and suffer more.

And yet the victims of this malady have no right to succumb tamely to it and to impose their own depressed moods and attitudes upon their fellow men. They ought rather to accept the off days as a part of the assigned program of their lives and so not be surprised when they come, or to measure all the hope and joy of life by the next twenty-four hours which they are somehow to live through.

The best cure for off days is to go right

REAL RELIGION

along with prescribed duties. This railroad man to whom I have referred is fortunate in being obliged to open the window of his ticket office at just such a time in the morning, to note the coming and going of trains, to attend to the numerous requests of the patrons of the road. His treadmill of duty is really his salvation, and any one who suffers from the same disease may well force himself whenever the off day comes to be even more scrupulous in the performance of his duty and more faithful in every detail.

Then, too, in our off days we should draw upon our reserves, should call to mind the bright, radiant days that constitute the real assets of a man's life. Matthew Arnold in one of his noblest poems says:

"Tasks in hours of insight willed
Can be in hours of gloom fulfilled."

That is the reason why exuberant people sometimes seem to get more out of a given day or a given experience than people of more phlegmatic temperament get; namely, that the larger satisfactions may serve as a kind of reserve fund on which heavy drafts may be made when the clouds gather and the north wind blows.

OFF DAYS

And maybe a person who suffers from the off days' disease should consider whether or not he may get rid altogether of the trouble. It may take a number of years of hard, persistent effort, but many a man has overcome the disposition to be depressed and ugly. Various weapons can be used. Health and exercise are important; contact with cheery people helps; the broadening of the mental horizon and the enriching of the artistic and musical sensibilities all fortify a man against the recurrence of his off days, and there is no better weapon than pure and vital religion.

“SAME OLD JOB”

OVER the telephone the other day I asked a man whom I had not seen for months what he was doing. “Same old job” was the reply, and the tone as well as the language indicated what he thought of it. It was not the note of disgust and open revolt, but rather that of “grin and bear it,” of patient acquiescence in the inevitable, together with the abandonment of hope that things would ever be better.

It seemed as if the voices of multitudes were speaking over the wire. I could hear the unvoiced complaint of the man who opens and shuts a gate all day long, the man who hands out tickets through a window, the man who delivers milk at the back door in the gray of the morning, the woman who stitches away on a garment, the woman who washes dishes, who mends the children’s garments, the woman who attends to the fretful and demanding babies. In fact, the whole multitude of persons condemned to a single kind of task, and that in itself terribly monotonous, spoke in that one

“SAME OLD JOB”

man's response over the wire, "Same old job."

Modern life presents no greater single personal problem than that of securing an honest and cheerful measure of service on the part of the multitudes to whom the progress and differentiation of industry has assigned relatively small and menial tasks of a treadmill character. The same personal problem confronts even those who have higher tasks, who do not have to delve and grind in the midst of material things, but who, nevertheless, do not escape that sense of weariness because of unyielding obstacles, cramping limitations, and only a moderate degree of success when their ambition is spurring them to larger achievements. And so it becomes a very vital question to all of us, how can we face the "same old job" morning by morning with new courage, initiative, and hope?

First, by looking at it as a new task. That may seem altogether impossible, if we have sat in the same chair or stood behind the same counter for ten, fifteen, or twenty years; but it is within the field of the possible, provided one has determination enough. Try it some day and approach

REAL RELIGION

the old duty as though you had never seen it before, and see if it does not present to you some new and inspiring aspects.

Or we might think of the next day's service as the last one we should ever render. That might make things seem a little solemn, to be sure, but it would prevent us, perhaps, from careless and slipshod work, from leaving any raw edges for our successor to deal with. The wonderful thing about the work of Jesus Christ was that he finished it, left it in precisely the right shape for his followers to take it up and carry on.

There is incentive, too, in trying to imagine how some other man would do the same thing. Suppose the President could spare a day from the White House and the oversight of this nation to do your job, how would he approach it? What new ways and improved methods would he employ? What kind of a spirit would he show? What would be his attitude to his employers and the concern as a whole? How would he deal with the problem? This "other man" is not an impossibility or a myth. He may turn up any day, and you would better anticipate his coming by trying to do as well as he would do in your place.

“SAME OLD JOB”

And the last and chief source of fresh courage for the “same old job” is the consolation of being a soldier on duty. Unless we get some sense of the control and guidance of our life by a higher power we shall be apt once and again to recoil from the monotony and strain and irksomeness. But suppose you can say, “God wants me here. He put me here; from all I can see he wants me and no one else here. When he wants me elsewhere, he will give me release. I don’t deserve promotion, unless I have done my level best just here and now” — what a new phase that puts on the old task! The great theologian, Horace Bushnell, once preached a sermon entitled, “Every man’s life á plan of God.” To fulfil that plan is better than to get riches or fame, and in the long run, in proportion as we do our part toward its fulfilment, we obtain our greatest happiness.

THE COURAGE TO PART WITH THINGS

WE are frequently admonished to hold on to what we have. "Do not leave any articles in the car" is the injunction of some brakemen at the end of the journey. Some of us acquire a passion for hoarding, and if we live long in one place accumulate a lot of things which may be of no earthly good to us, but which we are not courageous enough to throw away. Some rooms impress you, on entering them, with being cluttered; too many knickknacks and gewgaws. It might be a blessing to that family to have to move; then perhaps they would discriminate between the real and the spurious artistic adornments.

If we all went through our personal belongings we should probably find a good many things that were better off in the wastebasket than in drawers and on shelves. Take the problem of old letters; what's the use of saving so many? Some people even go so far as to preserve every scrap of a note that comes into their possession.

TO PART WITH THINGS

They could produce the letter that John Jones wrote them in 1878 with regard to the state of the weather in West Podunk. Certain letters that have to do with great events and crises it is desirable to keep, and a man will think long before he throws away the tender missives he received in college or boarding-school from his father and mother. Into them went the very life-blood of the ones who gave him his being, and the counsel and love crystallized into written language are worth more to him than an inheritance of riches.

One or two guiding principles may help us to discriminate concerning what we would better keep and what we would better destroy or pass on to some one else. In the first place, it does not pay to hold on to the things that hinder us from growing. That to which we cling may have served good uses in its time, but it no longer helps us to be better or happier. Even sacred mementos may sometimes be so violently cherished by us that they act as a drain upon our nervous energies and our moral force. I have heard recently of a grieving mother, who every day takes out a little shoe worn once by a fair laddie,

who no longer makes music in that home, but who has gone to the fairer life, where "their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

This mother sheds copious tears each day, as she looks at this little memento of the one who was her pride and joy; but meantime she is nervous, listless, out of touch with life, living with her memories and not with her hopes. So the little shoe, dear as it is, becomes a drag on her, even a chain, to keep her back from the real consolation that comes to us in the presence of death; namely, the effort to take our place once again and do our work in a world which still holds for us joy, if we will only shake ourselves free of the fetters that would bind us to the past.

Another guiding principle is consideration as to whether in the place of the things we are loath to part with we can substitute something better. You do not want, for example, a creed, out of which the real life has gone, which the discoveries of scholarship have rendered obsolete, which your own religious experience has already outrun. You do not want any text-book, or even story-book, the reading of which will prevent

TO PART WITH THINGS

you from reading a better one. You do not want, my wealthy but parsimonious friend, the hundred dollars which some Armenian orphan, just bereft of his parents and hungry and naked, needs more than you do at this moment.

Our business is with the present. Let us always remember that. We would better throw away a good many things when we are through with them, lest they litter up the place where we live, and even worse than that, lest they fetter our lives in the pursuit of the things that are most worth while. The really brave man is he who can let some things go when they have served their uses and have ceased to yield anything to the development of character.

LIFE ON EASY STREET

I HAVE never been able to acquire any property on Easy Street, but since a few friends and acquaintances are just now residing there I am somewhat familiar with its life. It is an interesting and charming little community. I like to study it as I pay an occasional call or visit to the street.

There are my friends the Welloffs, for example. They never had any children and Welloff once confided to me that neither of them very much cared. And when I ventured to suggest that they adopt one he rejoined, "What do you take us for anyway!" Relieved of all parental responsibilities, they come and go as they please. Almost every winter they spend at least a few weeks in Florida or Egypt or some other balmy region. They are very hospitable when at home and I have met in their drawing-room some of the leading artists and musicians of the city. Once in a while they develop a rather ephemeral interest in some popular charity, and Mrs. Welloff was for one season the president of the Anti-

Public Expectoration League. I like to dine at the Welloffs. The eight courses are always delicious and faultlessly served as well. Their house is full of fascinating antiques and curios from all parts of the world. Somehow, I miss, however, the little shoes and dollies that might be here or there. But Mrs. Well-off is very fond of her canary and once sat up nearly all night to tend it when it was sick.

Just opposite the Welloffs is the fine stone mansion which belongs to my college classmate, Jack Chameleon, or to speak more exactly, to his wife, for after Jack had struggled along two or three years in his profession, a rich and estimable young lady captured his fancies and responded to his advances. They are now enrolled among the substantial people of the town. They have a number of children and plenty of servants to look after them, though they themselves never scant their parental duties. Perhaps it is my imagination, but it has seemed to me as if Chameleon ceased to feel the pressure upon him of the fight for daily bread, for he was poorer than most of us in college. Chameleon has undergone quite a cooling of professional ambitions. Though he maintains nominally office hours

they are well inside the limit of even a seven-hour working day. Not that he has altogether degenerated intellectually, but when I asked him the other day about that book which used to glow in his imagination as a possibility of the future before he met Mrs. C., he jokingly replied, "Oh, well, there are a lot of books of that type afloat now and if I should ever get mine out I doubt if it would find the public. Come over and play golf, won't you, some afternoon?"

There is another house on Easy Street where I call occasionally, but not so frequently as when little Elsie Sweetface was just beginning to toddle. What a fascinating little creature she was then! She is very pretty now at nine, but somehow her face often takes on a discontented and petulant expression. Things have been made very easy for Elsie all these nine years. The understanding was that if she cried for a thing she had better have it. "Get along with her as easily as you can," I once heard her mother remark to the nurse. She was bathed and clothed and fed long after the time when she ought to have begun to attend to these daily processes herself. When the public school proved a little hard

LIFE ON EASY STREET

she was sent to a private school. Indeed, her entire life has been ordered from the point of view of what would be most easy and agreeable for Elsie. I wonder if at thirty or even at eighteen she will thank her parents for their over-indulgence of her.

As you drive through Easy Street and view the well-kept lawns and comfortable dwellings the tone of things gratifies all your esthetic susceptibilities. And I know some people on the street who are living just as earnest and self-sacrificing lives as are being lived anywhere in the world today. Indeed I sometimes have a drawing toward Easy Street myself. And yet if these are the alternatives I know which I would choose for myself and children. As between Easy Street and a flabby intellect and Hardship Lane with an alert and acquisitive mind, as between Easy Street with a dull conscience and Hardship Lane with an active one, as between Easy Street with a patronizing, condescending spirit and Hardship Lane with a truly democratic one, as between Easy Street with an ossifying heart and Hardship Lane with sympathies as wide as the world, I can decide in one second which I would choose.

THE STANDSTILLS OF LIFE

YOU are traveling a crowded, narrow thoroughfare. The stream of humanity advances slowly and with many turns and twists. In the street the drays, wagons, and motor vehicles barely crawl along. Suddenly everything stops. Something has happened to impede further progress in any direction. It makes no difference how important your engagement somewhere else, you must wait until the policeman straightens out the tangle.

Sometimes in the early spring after a mild period that has started the buds there comes a succession of chilly, dreary days. The faint signs of new vegetation grow no more pronounced. It looks as if there has been a relapse into winter and you say, "Summer will never come."

The business of a great nation, which has moved forward for a number of years by leaps and bounds, returning rich rewards to those who conduct it, suddenly suffers an arrest. The chill of an inexplicable fear lays its paralyzing hand upon many industries.

STANDSTILLS OF LIFE

"The country is all right," you say, "but there is no gainsaying the fact that we have come to a halt for the present." A reform movement is strongly inaugurated and moves on splendidly for a while. But before long the wheels drive hard. Popular interest flags. The champions of this worthy cause are subjected to ridicule and even abuse. It begins to look as if they were visionary and too much in advance of public sentiment. The movement halts or even apparently recedes.

A strong, ambitious man with far-reaching plans only half realized is suddenly laid low on a bed of illness. The interests with which he has been identified suffer. Another may be found to take up his work, at least in part, but his own career halts for a time, the length of which he can only conjecture; invalidism holds him as its prisoner.

Now what shall we say about these standstills of life which in one form or another few of us escape? First, that, irritating as they are, they are meant to make us broader and better men and women. We may be too intent on one end. We must be made to think about something else for a little while. We may be and probably are far

too self-absorbed and self-centered. So we are suddenly, and, as we think, almost ruthlessly halted in order that our thought and sympathy may flow out in other directions.

Again the period of standstill may be utilized by us to good advantage. While you are waiting for the street blockade to cease you can patronize the apple woman, or send your thought above high buildings to the blue dome of heaven. While business halts, you can reexamine your commercial methods and projects in the light of the highest ethical standards. While your pet reform suffers a temporary eclipse you can ask whether the intensity of your zeal is matched with a spirit of patience and a good temper that refuses to be disconcerted even under adverse criticism. While you are ill you can make your sick-room as Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry Drummond made theirs, a place of peace and of unfailing cheeriness for those who resort thither.

Depend upon it, the standstills of life are among its most blessed boons. They have their great compensations, and whatever is worth while in our characters and in our purposes will suffer no permanent arrest.

SNAP JUDGMENTS

WHAT an ungracious thing it was in that dignified banker to refuse to recognize you on the street the other day. It is not the first time, either, that he has been so discourteous. It cannot be that he did not know you, for you have talked with him half a dozen times. It must be that he is an aristocrat, pure and simple.

The young woman who conversed so volubly at the boarding-house table the other night, in fact monopolizing the conversation and dealing chiefly in frivolities, surely cannot stand for much in the intellectual or moral realm. A pity it is that so many of our American girls are given over to dress, display, and society chit-chat, with no interest in better things.

How lacking in neighborhood spirit is that family which moved into the big house on the boulevard a few months ago! The members do not seem disposed either to make or to return calls. They seldom show themselves at public gatherings. Evidently they consider themselves quite above the ordinary

REAL RELIGION

run of their fellow men and are entirely lacking in community spirit.

Is there any stingier man in town than the rich merchant who turns down so many subscription papers presented to him at his office? He could easily afford to subsidize almost any of the causes which seek his charity. He must be hoarding all his money for his distant relatives since he has no near ones.

Thus we go on adding snap judgment to snap judgment, basing our impressions on a very limited acquaintance, and not hesitating to circulate our opinion broadcast. Now what are the facts?

The courtly old banker is really every inch a gentleman. He would never knowingly slight any one. But he often gets absorbed in trains of thought which so preoccupy his mind that, as he walks along the street, he practically sees no one, or if his gaze happens to rest upon others they have no more individuality than the lamp-posts. It may be an unfortunate habit, but it gives no true idea of his real disposition.

She whom you denominated frivolous was trying to liven up a rather somber company around the dinner-table and she was espe-

SNAP JUDGMENTS

cially anxious to lift her aunt, whose protégé she is, out of the dumps. This is the reason why her conversation rippled along. She was trying to recall the interesting and laughable incidents of the day for the sake of others, when it would have been much more agreeable to her to keep silent. The truth is, she is a wide reader and a thorough student. She gives an afternoon each week to visit among the poor. She dresses well, but why shouldn't she? She has plenty of money. But she is far from being a heartless society girl.

And that family that holds itself so aloof from the life of the town has its own special sorrow. There are good and sufficient reasons why they do not invite people to their home or mingle in the life of the neighborhood. Some time the skeleton in the closet will depart and then their neighbors will know how good and friendly they really are.

The stingy curmudgeon who turns down the subscription papers gives every week far more money than most of his critics give in ten years. He has a large number of private charities; he makes a specialty of widows and orphans. He bestows many gifts where the

name of the donor is never known to the recipient. He is averse to subscription papers and he does not care to exploit his own personality by affixing his name to libraries, schools, and colleges.

Let us beware of snap judgments. Let us construe our fellow men, their motives and actions, in a large, generous fashion. If it is possible to infer something to their credit from their behavior, even though on the surface it might appear rather discreditable to them, let us seek, if possible, to discover and promulgate a more favorable interpretation, and in cases where that more favorable construction does not easily appear, why not suspend judgment for a while?

Remember, too, that we are all liable to be the victims of snap judgments. The great teacher of Nazareth spoke golden words when he said to his disciples, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what . . . measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again."

THE ART OF APPRECIATION

ONCE on a time a lad employed in a home of wealth and culture, much to everybody's surprise, gave up his job of running errands and scouring the brasses, and departed. A friend asked him why he had acted thus. "Weren't you well fed?" "Yes." "Weren't you well paid?" "Yes." "Weren't you well treated?" "Yes." "What was the matter then?" "Well, I'll tell you. They treated me well enough and it's likely that at the next place I won't get as much money or as comfortable a bed. But I just wanted them to say once in a while, 'Well done, little Joe.'"

Little Joe spoke for a great many people besides himself. After one has done his little best over and over again, and studied to please in every particular, he is hardly human if he does not crave a bit of appreciation. Not that the right-minded person cares for flattery. He abhors that and suspects the one who brings it of some ulterior designs. But appreciation is an altogether different article from fawning praise. It is the just

and accurate estimate of work done and service rendered.

How many persons who receive benefits of various kinds accept them quite as a matter of course. A friend of mine, through his personal influence at Washington, helped to secure a pension for the widow of a soldier. It amounted to several hundred dollars annually, and when I remarked, "She must have been mighty grateful to you," my friend replied with a cynical little shrug, "She never thanked me."

Let there be more appreciativeness in the home. You'll get quicker and more complete obedience from that fine but sometimes very perplexing boy of yours if you make him aware that you note with approval the struggles he does make to toe the mark, the self-denial he now and then practises in order to comply with your wishes. To bring up children in an atmosphere which lacks the elements that parental fondness and appreciativeness contribute to it is like putting a tender tropical plant into the hard, cold ground on a November day. Children in the home, pupils in the school thrive and blossom into strong and lovely characters when they have the proper amount of ap-

ART OF APPRECIATION

preciation. On the other hand, the boys and girls themselves need to appreciate their parents, and it is to be feared that in this age, when parents are doing more for their children than ever before, there has not been a corresponding increase of deference and considerateness on the part of the children.

In the shop and factory there is the same righteous demand for appreciation, not of laziness or slipshod work, but of fidelity, of long-continued acceptable service, of the contribution which even the humblest worker is making to the success of the concern. Our labor problem would be nearer solution if employers oftener said, "Well done, little Joe."

The church is another field for the exercise of the art of appreciation. If your pastor helps you, tell him so. Don't be afraid of spoiling him. Ministers don't spoil so easily nowadays. That was a beautiful motto which a church once put on the wall to welcome a pastor returning from a long vacation, "We love you and we tell you so."

Let's begin this next week and be more appreciative. And does not courtesy, to say nothing now of higher considerations, demand that now and then, at least, we say "Thank you" to God?

OUR HUMAN ISLANDS

DID you ever live or sojourn on an island? If so, can you remember lying upon the sands some midsummer day and listening to the gentle splashing of the waters or watching the far-away sails? Your idle revery made more acute your sense of detachment from the mainland, of isolation from the great world of affairs, of being shut in with your own thoughts and emotions, and, as it were, cut off from former associations and interests. That must have been the feeling of the great Napoleon when exiled on the island of St. Helena, and that must have made the punishment peculiarly bitter for one who had figured so conspicuously in European politics.

Herein is a parable. We are all more or less islanders. We send out our little boats that meet, salute, and pass one another and perhaps exchange commodities, but still we are separated by great gulfs and inlets from our fellow men. We live under the same roof with our kindred, we work in the same store with those whom we have known from

OUR HUMAN ISLANDS

childhood, we go in and out on the trains year after year with the same people, and yet how far apart we may be from them in all the movement of our inner life, in our hopes and ideals, in our thought of God and duty and heaven. Scientists tell us that even the tiny molecules do not touch one another, but whirl about in space in their independent orbits. And how few human lives really meet and melt into a common purpose.

Pathetic from some points of view indeed is this isolation. It certainly makes a great appeal for charity in our judgment of others. Said a woman who had recently lost her husband, "I am sorry to decline invitations to social functions. I don't want to be selfish in my grief, but whenever I go to places where I used to go with him, the sense of his absence is so keen that I can hardly bear it. It seems as if I were living on an island. My life is so partial, so incomplete, so broken, that I cannot enter heartily and joyously into the old pleasures and merrymakings. My greater half is gone. People about me do not begin to realize how far away in spirit I am from them." This widow represents the great army of the bereaved, toward

whom we who have not thus suffered should extend the utmost consideration and not let our own joy in earthly things jar upon their lonely spirits.

Sympathy and tact are needed, too. There comes a time when every growing boy draws apart from his mother. She finds it hard to understand his reserve; she yearns for the old confidential relationship. But let her not chafe under the new conditions. Her boy is undergoing those pangs of self-discovery which accompany the first experience of adolescence; he is coming to a knowledge of his own individuality; he will have to dwell apart for a time on his island. But if he has been surrounded by right influences hitherto, he will in due time reestablish the precious relationship with his mother, though on a different plane.

The girl comes home, having completed her college course. She is no longer a girl, but a young woman. It is hard for her to adjust herself to her old place in the family. Her parents feel a difference in her. Misunderstandings may easily grow up if the parents insist on too great close conformity to former practises. Give her time to work out her personal problem. As she retires

OUR HUMAN ISLANDS

into her island, believe that she will learn lessons there to be gained nowhere else.

On the other hand, people conscious of the gulf between them and others should beware of becoming narrow and provincial. One whose own life has become sharply defined from others should not be proud of his isolation nor let the spirit of reticence and detachment grow upon him. We are still a part of the human race, sharers in the great elemental human passions. We must not become hermits and anchorites.

The last book of the Bible was written by a man living on an island, who apparently fretted sometimes over his limitations and looked eagerly forward to the time when there should be "no more sea" cutting him off from continents and empires. And the ideal for all of us sooner or later is so to link our lives to others that, without sacrificing our personality, we shall feel the thrill and inspiration of kinship with humanity. That time ought to come sooner or later for all of us. As a poet has said,

"When we are dead, when you and I are dead,
Have rent and tossed aside each earthly fetter,
Have wiped the grave dust from our wondering eyes,
And stand together fronting the sunrise,
I think that we shall know each other better."

REAL RELIGION

But we need not wait for death to bring us into closer, tenderer relations to others. While we are still island dwellers, we may hoist our beacons and send forth over the waves the gleam of a friendly light.

THE RESERVES IN HUMAN NATURE

NOTHING is more admirable in the being called man than the power he possesses to rise to an emergency and by drawing upon his reserves to meet bravely an unexpected test or carry to successful conclusion a difficult undertaking.

Think of the reserves of patience which enable the mother, for example, to endure the demands which careless and sometimes irritating children make upon her. The childless woman looks on with wonder. She has never taken any lessons in the school of parenthood and therefore she has not stored up a supply of that particular grace which a mother needs. And the manual laborer is another person whose supply of patience challenges respect. He has to have it in order to keep at his monotonous task day after day and fulfil with almost machine-like precision his part in the social and industrial scheme. There are in many a man also reserves of heroism. As you see Smith or Jones on the prosaic plane of their daily existence, you might not pick either of them

out as conspicuous examples of the heroic, and they are both, like the rest of us, blends of strength and weakness. But wait a bit. Something may happen tonight or tomorrow that will make this same Jones or Smith a popular hero. He will be rushing into a burning building and rescuing a sleeping child, or he will stand at his post on the front of the car when by jumping he might avoid a serious accident that may maim him for life. Or he will meet some financial reverse or some personal bereavement with a fortitude of which we had never suspected him to be capable.

“Hurrah for Jones!” we will be saying. What good stuff there is in him, isn’t there? Even more beautiful and inspiring are the reserves of kindness and generosity which multitudes of men and women possess and draw upon readily when they are demanded. The world is far more tender than it was in former ages. How the millions of dollars do roll up when a great catastrophe does its devastating work! Cheerful, unforced giving it is, the fruit of real sympathy and pity. Bravo for human nature, we say again, as men of all creeds and no creeds unite to mitigate the woes of sufferers thousands of miles away.

HUMAN NATURE

And what we witness on a large scale is duplicated daily in every city and hamlet of the land on a small scale as neighbor goes to neighbor on some errand of help or comfort, as friend stands by friend in distress, as brothers spring to the succor of their brothers who have fallen behind in the race.

Yes, indeed, this poor weak humanity of ours is capable of far greater things than is often realized. And each individual can do more and bear more, and when the pinch comes lend a stronger hand to others than we have been in the habit of doing, if we will only call out our reserves. And we can face temptation, too, and down it in reliance upon these same reserves of character. We need never, even when sorely pressed, yield a single point to the enemy of our souls if we bethink ourselves of the reenforcements within easy call.

Of course, the securing of these reserves is a matter of forethought and of planning. We shall never have any reserves in the bank to draw upon when the proverbial rainy day comes, if we do not begin to save now. We shall never have any funds of valuable information to enrich our lives and the lives of others unless we improve our present chance

REAL RELIGION

to study, read, and acquire facts and truths. We shall never have any reserves of virtue which may save the day for us, as the arrival of Blücher saved the day for Wellington at Waterloo, unless we commence at once to lead virtuous, self-denying, and sympathetic lives.

THE GOOD LISTENER

ON my morning walk I frequently find myself behind two gentlemen who usually accompany each other to their places of business. Both are men of culture and of standing in the community. Yet I notice that one does nearly all the talking. He seems extremely interested in his own views and presents them to his companion with much animation. Sometimes he gesticulates vigorously. I am seldom near enough to play unintentionally the part of eavesdropper, but I should judge that a variety of timely and profitable themes were being discussed, as might naturally be expected when men get to be pretty intimate acquaintances. But the silence of one of these men and the volubility of the other are what impress me, and I find myself wishing that the lips of Mr. Ready-to-Talk would be sealed for a while in order to give the man who listens to him with such uniform politeness a chance to air his views; for being a man of ideas and of convictions, he certainly has something well worth saying.

REAL RELIGION

These men represent two types. One has cultivated the art of expression and the other the art of listening. One art is perhaps as important as the other, but does not the listening capacity come first in order of time? If as a child you did not listen to your parents, your teacher, your minister, if you did not learn to hold your attention firmly upon the speaker, if you did not gain some comprehension of the fact that the acquisition of knowledge depends on the ability to listen at the right time and in the right way to the right person, then you are to be pitied. The single, beautiful glimpse we have of the boyhood of the Perfect Child reveals him in the temple among the doctors "both hearing them, and asking them questions." Even one possessed with wisdom far beyond his years needed to maintain all through his life the attitude of a listener.

When we undertake to cooperate with others we find it essential to listen to what they have to say. Have you never talked with a person who, you were absolutely sure, was not hearing a word you said, though for politeness' sake he tried to appear as if he were listening? But he was only waiting

THE GOOD LISTENER

for you to get through so that he could ventilate his own opinions. A genuine conversation with that sort of person is an impossibility. He is to all practical purposes a soliloquist. He seeks your society for the moment, not because he wants to know your views, but because he cannot repress his own any longer.

The more civil attitude, the attitude which enables men actually to confer on subjects of common interest, presupposes that one's own information is not complete and that the other man or the other group of men has something to offer which will instruct and enrich you.

These are days when it is of the utmost importance for each of us to cultivate the listening attitude, to be hospitable to new ideas, at least to the extent of informing ourselves as to exactly what those who advocate them mean. Here is a new theory of the inspiration of the Bible, here is a new program for our social and industrial relationships. Why should we close our ears to its advocates? Who knows but we may hear something to our lasting advantage? There are voices not of earth to which it pays us to turn a listening ear occasionally.

REAL RELIGION

There is no deafness so deplorable as that which prevents us from hearing what God would say to us, in the quiet of the dawn or in the lull that comes at sunset, in the solitude of the woods and along crowded human highways. Let us take to heart Longfellow's exquisite lines:

“Listen to voices in the upper air,
Lose not thy simple faith in mysteries.”

HUMAN BEINGS AS LINKS

“**I**’M only a link,” said one of the most useful women in the world laughingly the other day. She was referring to the fact that she had recently been the means of bringing together a youth who wanted to work and an employer of labor who was looking for that kind of a fellow. That is just what she has been doing in one way and another all the sixty years of her modest and unselfish career. A wide acquaintance in the working classes, together with an entrée into circles of wealth and influence, has given her the joy and privilege of acting as a go-between in almost innumerable cases. So if there is in her community a middle-aged spinster desirous of a position as housekeeper, or a lady wanting a companion for a European trip, or a weary mother eager for a helper with her children, or a young man anxious for a chance to work for his board while taking a course in architecture or engineering, or a Sunday-school superintendent seeking in despair a bright teacher for a class of restless boys, it

has come to be a matter of course for those acquainted with the situation to say, "Oh, go to Miss Greatheart, she'll know the right party."

We all owe a good deal to the people who serve as links between ourselves and something worth having. Think over the good things that have come to you through the years and see if they are not associated with some individuals who served as the medium. The teacher who induced you to choose a certain career, the friend who introduced you to the woman who became your wife, the minister who conducted you to the point where you made connection with some great and inspiring truth — what were they but links, and because they did their duty as links you are where you are today. And so in a multitude of lesser instances the human link was equally important even if those who served as such were not always conscious of the favor they were doing you.

One day years ago a young man was standing on the banks of an Oriental river with two companions. Suddenly a fourth young man appeared. "Behold him," remarked the leader to the other two, and there was something in the radiant countenance of the

HUMAN BEINGS AS LINKS

stranger and something in the tone in which their friend referred to him that led the two to follow up the stranger. After cultivating his acquaintance a few hours they went forth to say the same word, "Behold," to their own particular friends, and from that day to this the Christian Church has been recruited because one and another have been willing to say, "Behold," and thus to serve as links between the founder of Christianity and those who had not made his acquaintance.

To be a good link requires, it is true, some self-effacement and much consideration for others. A young woman started on a journey the other day and just as the train moved out of the station a gentleman entered whom she knew, accompanied by a young woman whom he placed in the next seat. Then he introduced the young women, saying, "You'll have a good talk together on your way." Ah, but that was just what young lady number one didn't want, for she was tired. But overcoming her reluctance she entered on a long and what proved to be a mutually interesting conversation. As a result young woman number two is in social settlement work in the Hawaiian Islands

REAL RELIGION

today. That outcome was furthest from her thoughts when she entered the train, and she owes her present place to the fact that her chance acquaintance on the train who knew of the position took pains then and later to guide her to it.

Every good person, from the statesman striving to bind the nations closer together to the humblest mother strengthening the ties between her children and God and truth, is a link, and there is no more honorable calling in life.

ONE GOOD LIFE

MUCK-RAKING and cynicism to the contrary, the world is full of good lives. All about us are men and women as pure as gold and as true as steel. They are not perfect, but are in the process of becoming perfect. We ought not to overlook them in this age when the seamy side of life so often flaunts itself in our face. We ought not to be so absorbed in our quest for wealth or pleasure as to fail to do them honor. The attention which they get in the newspapers is no measure of their worth or influence. They are the salt that keeps our civilization from decay, the leaven that is gradually purifying the world.

I want briefly to tell the story of one good life that has just gone out, or, it would be truer to say, gone forward at the age of fourscore. The notice of her death occupied about four lines in the press of the city where she had lived most of her days. She was an "old maid" and she lived much of her life in a boarding-house. She was a wage-earner until advancing age made it

REAL RELIGION

impossible to go to and fro to her daily tasks. In her declining years she had to accept the friendly service of those not of her kin, for she outlived her relatives. She had to pass through one of the bitterest of all experiences; namely, that of being set one side from the busy world and of being compelled in comparative obscurity, and forgotten by many who once knew her, to await the will of God.

This woman never knew the comfort of a home of her own, the bliss of happy wifehood, the exquisite joy of motherhood, the wholesome delights that go with a circle of lovely and interesting friends. Her working days, prolonged far beyond those of most working women, were laborious and monotonous. Vacations were infrequent and brief. As the world estimates values she lived a narrow, dull, and tiresome life.

But did she? Let me tell you what the minister said at her funeral. He had known her long and well and all that he said was corroborated by those associated with her day by day. Three qualities, he remarked, shone in her. The first was steadfastness. She could be counted on to reach the establishment punctually in the morning and all

ONE GOOD LIFE

day long to do her work promptly and thoroughly. The next quality was quietness. The fever of this hustling, rustling age never made her nervous and excitable. An atmosphere of tranquillity perpetually surrounded her. The next trait was cheerfulness. Though every day brought its temptations to irritability she succeeded in wearing a happy countenance. She saw the funny side of fussy and disagreeable people who made all sorts of unreasonable demands upon her and she would slip a quiet little chuckle up her sleeve as she discerned the foibles of her fellow men. She found it possible to be uniformly pleasant even in a boarding-house. These three qualities, the minister went on to say, made her efficient. She actually accomplished a vast deal of useful work during her long lifetime. The possession of such qualities — steadfastness, quietness, and good temper — will make any one capable and of service in the world.

Now this is not an obituary of a brilliant woman, but a side-light or two upon a typical average good life. We all know such lives among our friends and acquaintances. It is well to strew flowers upon the graves of our heroic dead, to compose long eulogies of men

REAL RELIGION

and women of distinction, but let the praises of inconspicuous goodness also be sung.

A good life—what a priceless contribution it makes to human welfare and progress! When such lives go from us, let us thank God for them; while they are still with us let us revere and cherish them.

“The dear Lord’s best interpreters
Are humble, human souls;
The gospel of a life like theirs
Is more than books or scrolls.
From scheme and creed the light goes out,
The saintly fact survives,
The blessed Master none can doubt,
Revealed in holy lives.”

A MAN AND HIS ECHO

ONE of the earliest and most vivid recollections of boyhood days is in connection with a visit to a farmer uncle, who took me where I could hear a famous echo. As he threw his powerful voice against the cliffs a number of yards away, back it came to him, repeating almost instantly and with wonderful clearness his exact words. It seemed to my boyish fancy a remarkable thing that there could be such a reproduction of human tone after it had once left the lips. But since then I have heard other echoes, some of them quite noted ones, and I have come to apprehend the laws of sound governing their production. But an echo is still to me one of the most interesting and suggestive of natural phenomena.

As I have gone on in years, I have been fortunate enough to encounter the echoes of human lives that have transmitted something of their personality to me long after they have vanished from the earth. The first was the echo of a soldier uncle who fainted under the rays of the fierce

REAL RELIGION

southern sun, giving his life for his country just as truly as if he had fallen in battle when charging the foe. I was but a wee baby when he marched bravely away with his regiment and, of course, he never influenced me personally, but in the forty years since he met a soldier's death, echoes of him have been repeatedly coming to my ears, in the abundant testimony of his surviving comrades to his manliness and kindness in camp and on the march, in the tributes to his sterling Christian character from men who worked at the same carpenter's bench, and in the veneration still felt for him in the church of which he was a modest and devoted member.

In college the echoes of men who had preceded us resounded through the dormitories and recitation rooms. Figures that we never saw became real to the eye of the imagination as we learned about the athletic prowess of this man, the scholarly achievements of another, the rare personal charm and influence of still another. Every great school has its splendid traditions of men who wrought nobly in student days and then went out to live useful and honorable lives.

As I have resided in one community after

A MAN AND HIS ECHO

another, I have always heard about former residents who had died or moved away before I came, but who were still held in affectionate esteem and whose absence was continually mourned. They were invariably the progressive, public-spirited men who could be relied on in emergencies, who helped to initiate and carry through undertakings bearing on the public welfare, who were not always scheming to get what they could out of their fellow citizens, but to contribute all they could to the happiness and prosperity of others.

What a splendid thing it is to leave behind you such an echo that the Scripture will be literally fulfilled, "He being dead yet speaketh." The tone quality is perpetuated in what others say and think about you. It pervades the region to such an extent that those who come after us cannot help discovering intimations here and there of what we were and what we did.

What cheer there is also in this thought for those of us who feel that our lives are running away without our accomplishing much. But we are to be judged not simply by the impression we make today, but by the echo that will come back days hence

REAL RELIGION

to those who may never see us in the flesh. "That man stood for the right when it was unpopular to do so." "That woman gave herself most patiently and unsparingly for her children." "That man was never too busy to be kind." So the echoes will come back in one form and another. Much depends on the man. The echo of Judas Iscariot's life still reverberates in the caverns and the tombs of human life while the echo of Jesus of Nazareth is like the pealing of sweet bells at eventide.

THE MOTHER'S PART

S AID a well-known public speaker the other day in an address on the relative rights and duties of husband and wife, "I refuse to admit that I am the only breadwinner in my family. I consider that my wife contributes no small share to the ongoing of the family life." Amen to that manly sentiment! Cold cash does not measure, as it could not buy, the services of a mother in the home, for which she usually gets only her own board and clothes. No eight-hour or even ten-hour day for her. She is often on duty from sunrise to sunrise again. If she were paid on the scale that hired girls are paid, she might have a snug little sum in the bank at the end of the year. Then, again, how frequently she adds to the family exchequer by holding back the husband from foolish speculations. Many a woman has by her forethought, prudence, and thrift saved her husband from financial ruin.

This is the lowest plane on which to view the work of a mother. She constantly has

REAL RELIGION

to put to use her ingenuity and wit in behalf of the higher interests of the home. She needs and she often possesses the insight and judicial qualities of a justice of the supreme court in order to settle the little disputes between the children. She must be a diplomat and harmonize conflicting personalities. I talked the other evening with a mother who for twenty-five long years had played the part of peacemaker. Her husband's mother had always lived in the house and had been always lavish of her criticisms of the children, whom she considered not nearly as perfect as her own son had been. So the grandchildren had grown up resentful of grandma's interference and harsh judgments, and the gentle mother had all she could do to keep the atmosphere of the home sweet and friendly. "But," she said with gratitude and gladness in her tone, "I believe I have succeeded fairly well in harmonizing the family, and though it has been hard, it is all right."

This, indeed, is the crowning glory of motherhood—to be able to quiet and steady and ennoble the life of husband and bairns, through her wise, loving influence constantly though unobtrusively exercised. If it were

THE MOTHER'S PART

not so common a phenomenon we should marvel more than we do at the wonderful patience of mothers. When a girl goes to a college settlement for a year or two to take care of other folks' children we clap our hands and say, "What self-denial, what devotion!" But I should like to know if it is any more noble to fetch and carry for other people's children for a year or two than it is for one's own for a long lifetime.

Of course the mother gets something out of it. She ought to. Besides the love her husband and children bear her, she grows intellectually and spiritually. She keeps pace with the children in their studies. She learns lessons in self-control that only a mother can learn. She rounds out into a beautiful and symmetrical womanhood, and though she may not be as accomplished as her maiden sister in music and art, she is not one whit behind her in the essentials of a genuine education.

Let us value our mothers, then, while we have them. James A. Garfield never did a nobler thing than when, after he had taken the oath to be loyal to the duties involved in the Presidency of the United States, he turned and kissed his venerable mother.

REAL RELIGION

Our mothers are our good angels. Let us never make them our slaves. Let us think of them in the midst of our good times. Let us plan for their pleasure and comfort. And let us begin at once so to do.

ALL HAIL TO THE BREADWINNER

THE other day a little bevy of people entered a railway restaurant and took possession of a table. There were four children to begin with, all of school age, besides a toddling youngster. There was a youngish-appearing woman who seemed to be acting in the capacity of a mother's helper and a woman, with a good many wrinkles in her face, who was plainly the mother of the little tribe. Last of all came the father, well loaded down with bundles and of a serious not to say solemn demeanor. He took his seat at the head of the table and told the waiter to bring four orders of chops and potatoes with a "side" of cold tongue. The family was evidently on its way to a summer resort and good cheer was abundant and expectation ran high. A happy, healthy, harmonious family it seemed to be, both in quality and in quantity, the kind of family that Theodore Roosevelt would approve.

At a little side table in the same restau-

rant sat a gentleman and lady watching the pretty scene. "How jolly they all seem," said the gentleman. To which his companion replied, "All but the father. Do you notice how grave he is? And I don't wonder. Think of providing bread three times a day for those seven hungry people, to say nothing about chops. I declare, I sometimes marvel at the courage and endurance of the father of a family. Perhaps his daily effort with hands or brain is the only thing that keeps off starvation from those children. And there must be millions like him who have the sole responsibility for other lives."

Undoubtedly there are. Not only do countless fathers win the bread for wives and children, but brothers do it for sisters and sons for mothers. It has always been so since civilization began. One half the world carries the other half on its back. Socialistic theories break down at this point. No reconstruction of society can ever relieve the true man of the duty or deprive him of the joy of winning the daily bread of those dearest to him. This ambition steadies and inspires him as he toils all day long at the counter or the loom or the anvil or the

HAIL THE BREADWINNER

bench. Had he no such motive work might become unendurable.

But do those for whom he works always appreciate what a load rests upon "father's" shoulders? Is it any wonder that sometimes his face gets tense and the lines in it deepen? These are days of tremendous strain and competition in the industrial world. Sometimes when a man kisses his wife good-bye in the morning he hardly knows what will be his fortunes or misfortunes before he greets her again. Temptations, too, confront the business man today from dawn till sunset. He is in constant danger of becoming mean or sordid or tricky or false. He needs, therefore, the appreciation and help of those for whose sake alone he ventures into the difficult and perilous places.

So, then, honor and guard the breadwinner. When you get your check at the regular time, college boy or college girl, don't take it as a matter of course, but write a line of gratitude to "dear old dad." And, you the wife of his bosom and the other bairns still in the home nest, never let the one who wins for you your daily bread go hungry himself for lack of love and consideration.

REAL RELIGION

Happy breadwinner, gifted with the ability to provide for the material wants of others! May you win their tender love and for yourself that pearl of great price, a good name and a noble character.

“FOND OF HIS FOLKS”

“**H**E’S fond of his folks,” said a man to me recently concerning a third person whom I have never met. This was one of several comments passed. What the others were I have forgotten. The thing that sticks in my mind is the fact that this particular person likes his own people. That single element in his make-up predisposes me in his favor. When I meet him I shall expect to find a certain kind of man. He may be defective in other particulars, open to criticism because of this or that peculiarity, but he cannot be wholly bad and my heart warms up to him in advance because he is said to possess that quality of loyalty to his friends and his family.

Yet when characterizing a man, why should you mention this trait as if it were exceptional, as if only now and then a man or woman were found of whom it is true? Pray of whom should we be fond, if not of our own kith and kin? Who has done more for us than they? Who has borne with us more patiently in season and out of season, when

REAL RELIGION

we were worthy of their affection and when we were far from worthy of it? Has Tom, Dick, or Harry, has your chance acquaintance on the train or the steamer, has the man in the next block done more for you, year after year, than your father, your mother, your sister, your brother? And, on the whole, are there any nicer people to live with or to be identified with than just our own dear people?

Families differ in their possession and exhibition of this mutual regard. Even within the same family circle now and then you find, if not a black sheep, at least an "off horse" who does not pull with the team, who prefers to flock by himself. But is there anything finer in human life than a united, harmonious family, all of whose members are enthusiastic over one another, not blind to one another's faults, but quietly proud of the family history and traditions, standing by one another through thick and thin, never ashamed to confess their lineage, doing all in their power to strengthen the family ties and to give new honor and dignity to the family name?

To be sure this warm family feeling may degenerate into clannishness, exclusiveness

“FOND OF HIS FOLKS”

and feuds with other families leading to long-continued guerrilla warfare like that which sometimes characterizes life in the remote southern mountains. But, as a rule, the families that care a great deal for themselves are the families that care most about other homes, too, and that contribute most to the common welfare.

So here's to the bond that unites us in the family life. Let us cherish it not only when Old Home Week comes and Thanksgiving and the other occasions when we make formal pilgrimages to the places where we used to live, but all through the year. Let us not forget those little courtesies that strengthen the family tie and sweeten the home relationships. Let us consider it a high compliment to have it said of us, "He's fond of his own folks."

A HOME-MAKER

WHEN she passed the other evening into the larger life, at the ripe age of seventy, the big world hardly noted her going, but the little world of which she was the center seemed suddenly smaller and lonelier, and because her life-story is that of a great multitude of God-fearing, self-sacrificing women whose virtues seldom are publicly recorded, but whose quiet efficiency helps to keep the universe stable, does it seem worth while to tell it.

A home-maker she was more than anything else from the hour she went as a fair young bride to a New England city even to the end of her days. The outward habitation was transferred from time to time, but in the numerous migrations East and West the home life had under her molding touch a quality and a beauty all its own. Amid the privations of the frontier the light from her lamp of faith and love shone as brightly as when she pitched her tent amid the refinements of an older civilization.

She had her full share of human vicissi-

A HOME-MAKER

tudes, but you knew that whenever or wherever you rang her door-bell she would greet you with a smile and a warm hand-clasp. More than once she quaffed the deepest cup of sorrow which a mother can put to her lips, but from the heart she could say of the baby boys who had passed from her sight:

"Mine in God's gardens run to and fro,
And that is best."

As the children who remained grew to manhood and womanhood and as new little homes began to be made not far away and as birdlings came to those new nests her heart expanded, too, and the home-making instinct found fresh fields for exercise. The brides came back to her for counsel with reference to their maids and their menus and the bridegrooms found in her a ready though never an intermeddling confidant. As Thanksgiving and Christmas recurred, children and grandchildren, aunts and cousins gravitated naturally to the familiar hearthstone where her serene and gracious presence dominated and directed every joyous reunion.

But the outgo of her sympathies was not limited to the family circle. She served her

own home all the better because she ministered directly or indirectly to many another home in the community. Her church was not only a place where she worshiped her God and found nourishment for her best life, but it opened to her a door of opportunity, and through organizations like the King's Daughters she developed the latent powers of others, fostered their charitable impulses, and set in motion definite agencies which are still multiplying and perpetuating her influence.

A modest home was hers, with comfort enough, but with few tokens of affluence. She knew how to make a little go a long way. She respected learning and letters and had a keen desire to keep pace with the best thoughts of the world. She coveted for her children the opportunities of college and of travel. She imposed no fetters upon their own broadening ideas, though they knew what "Mother's Bible" meant to her and at what fountains she daily fed her own strength. There was, too, an ample place in that home for the element of fun. She had herself the merry spirit that doeth good like medicine. Only that and the grace of God would have

A HOME-MAKER

enabled her to bear the hardships and disappointments that were her portion.

She was not a perfect woman and as I have already intimated she was not an exceptional woman. Had she been the latter, you would have read about her in *The Social Settlement Tidings* or in *The Club Woman's Weekly* or in the *Daily Tell-It-All*. She was just a plain, ordinary home-maker—nothing more, nothing less. She knew how to make a home to perfection. That was a large enough sphere for her. It offered as big a fulcrum as she wanted for helping to lift the world. Nor was her life all outgo. Great as is her reward to-day in the heavenly existence, she received while here no meager returns for what she gave. The experiences of wifehood and motherhood, a half century of home building, an abounding good-will to others reaching from her nearest neighbors to the ends of the earth—all these yielded their rich fruitage in character. And what career is there that offers to consecrated womanhood today larger opportunities and rewards than the good, old-fashioned vocation of wife, mother, and home-maker?

WHAT SHALL THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN DO?

THAT brilliant Scotch writer, Ian Mac-laren, the author of the famous Bonnie Brier Bush stories, wrote, a few years ago, an article with the striking caption, "Shall We Shoot the Old Minister?" In it he set forth the pitiable plight of many preachers who find themselves not wanted by churches after they have passed the dead-line of fifty. He offered the humorous suggestion that the only thing to do for these worn-out servants of the Lord is to take them out and shoot them.

But the distress today is hardly less among a large number of persons in middle life than it is with those whose heads are white with the snows of many winters. Moreover, it is not the ministerial class only which suffers, but in other professions, and notably in business, the young, hustling, well-equipped fellows fresh from colleges and the schools of technology are shouldering the older generation to the rear. "There is not much chance in business today for a man who has passed

MIDDLE-AGED MAN DO?

forty," said one not long ago, who had been thrown out of a remunerative place by a consolidation of banks and who had knocked in vain at the door of other possible opportunities. As business becomes more highly organized and power is concentrated in the hands of a few, there is less chance for a man to wedge his way in after the dew of youth has gone, unless he has a pull with the higher powers or possesses special aptitudes.

And even to men who are not themselves the victims of sudden reverses, the coming of the middle-age period brings with it often a sense of depression and foreboding. They realize how swiftly time flies and how few years remain in which their powers will be adequate to the difficult task of breadwinning. They see the prizes of life snapped up by men ten or fifteen years their juniors and they are filled with apprehension with regard to what the morrow may bring forth.

Now there are three sharp, clear messages to speak to the army of timid or discouraged men in middle life. The first is, don't lose your grip. The minute that goes, you are on the downward slope. Hold on to your-

REAL RELIGION

self at every hazard, to your courage, your enthusiasm, your buoyancy of spirit. Resolve that, come what may, hardships, reverses, disappointments, your spirit shall not be crushed or embittered.

Next, do not slacken your efforts. Here is where so many make a fatal mistake. They reason that because they are somewhat handicapped by their age they will never amount to much and so they grow careless and inert. They do not exhaust every opportunity for personal culture. They do not make every effort possible to better their condition. Call to mind men who have gone on into middle life and advancing years, pushing harder all the time, never relaxing in a single particular. For that reason they are not today stranded and disheartened.

In the third place, and most important of all, hold on to faith. "Never despair," said Phillips Brooks, "of a world over which God reigns." Trust the future instead of fearing it. Believe that it holds good for you and yours. Things are always happening. Combinations of circumstances are always taking place that may issue favorably for you. Above all, believe that every human life is the plan of the Divine Mind and that there

MIDDLE-AGED MAN DO?

is always help for the life that is ready to be helped.

Nothing is more inspiring than to see the way in which some men in middle life do wake up and register a growth and a capacity for achieving things which they did not seem to exhibit even when young men. All about us are growing, energetic, hopeful, aspiring men and women in middle life. They are going to do better work as the years go by. The world will have a place for them. They will be wanted. You may be among that number.

THIS NEXT WEEK'S FRIENDLINESS

I LIKE the grand old Saxon word friendliness. It carries with it the savor of all things sweet and gracious. It stands for that delicate touch of life upon life whereby the sorrow and woe of the world are assuaged and men are lifted into nobleness. I know two young children whose one criterion of strangers, be they of the human or of the brute creation, is, "Are they friendly?" That is the first thing they want to find out about a new acquaintance and other considerations take a subordinate place.

How many persons lack just this crowning virtue! They are amiable and respectable. They won't lie or steal. But you would never think of going to them with your burden, and it is difficult to imagine them interesting themselves in other persons when such interest involves any sacrifice of time or ease. And we know other persons like the late Prof. Henry Drummond, for instance, whose very presence radiates friendliness. It distils from the tips of their fingers, it sounds in the tones of their voices; it seems

FRIENDLINESS

to be the atmosphere by which they are constantly surrounded.

The trouble with non-friendly people is not antipathy to their kind, but they have walled themselves away from their fellow men, and in doing so they have not only stopped the flow of good-will from outsiders into their own lives, but they have dammed the stream of kindness that might otherwise issue from them to the refreshment of others. You cannot get within a thousand miles of the inmost lives of these persons. Even with a smiling exterior they constantly disappoint you and frequently irritate you, for you know if you could only once get at them their virtue would do you good. But the citadel of their hearts can only be carried by a long and vigorous assault. You must cross the drawbridge and batter down a number of heavy doors before you can really get at them.

But friendliness is outgoing and outreaching. It does not dwell behind barred gates. Neither is it officious or inquisitive. It is simply the effluence of a spirit sensitive to the needs of men, eager to give help and sympathy. A minister's wife was commended to me the other day as possessing in a rare de-

REAL RELIGION

gree this quality. "She is not such a master hand at prayer-meetings," said my informant, "but she does carry on her heart the Christian welfare of every person in the parish."

What a change it would make in this big, fevered world if friendliness were the characteristic mark of persons as they met with and dealt with one another! The opposite attitude is painfully prevalent. We cannot remedy the situation all at once, but we can, beginning where we are, strive to be friendly, the mistress with her cook, the master with his coachman, the teacher with his pupil, the neighbor with his neighbor, the parent with his child and the child with his parent, the clerk with his employer and the employer with his clerk.

Only we must plan for it. Why not block out the program of the coming week with a view to friendliness? You can show it in places where you have not hitherto conspicuously displayed it. It may hurt your pride to do so and it may call for some heroic effort. But you will be rewarded over and over again, for it has been well said by a sage of former time, "A man to have friends must show himself friendly."

WHEN IS A MAN OLD?

WHEN is a man old? This seems to be one of the burning questions of the day. The facetious Mrs. Partington answered it some time ago, by remarking that she did not consider any one old until he became an octagon or a centurion; or, perchance, might have outlived the use of his factories and become idiomatic. The old lady got her words badly mixed, as she was in the habit of doing; but there was at least a glimmer of good sense in what she said. If it is true that

“We live in deeds, not years: in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial,”

we have no business to affix the epithet “old” to some men because they are forty, or sixty, or even eighty.

Here comes a youth down the street, hardly out of his teens. He is faultlessly dressed, has the entrée of the best clubs and social circles, has been abroad several times. You would judge from a casual glance at him that he was in the heyday of his youth. But wait

REAL RELIGION

until you know him better. You will find that the adjective blasé fits him exactly. He has been surfeited with the sweets of life; he has dipped into everything that is going. Alas, he has altogether too much knowledge of the seamy side of life; he has no ambition and few expectations.

Here comes another man down the street. His head is white with the snows of many winters, but his form is erect; his face is beaming with kindness and good-will; his heart is young. The world opens itself freshly to him with each new dawn. He has the sense of wonder and anticipation which we associate with little children. He has had his share of struggle, disappointment, and sorrow, but he has kept his faith in God and his fellows. Now, why should you call him old and the victim of ennui young? Or, if you would thus characterize either, why not specify exactly what you mean by the use of terms which, if not clearly defined, carry with them an undue measure either of commendation or opprobrium.

What shall we do with the old men? A great physician rises up and declares that they ought to be retired from responsible positions. His dictum starts the pen of the

WHEN IS A MAN OLD ?

funny paragraphers the country over, and all sorts of methods of disposing of septuagenarians are proposed, ranging from chloroforming to shooting in cold blood. But when we come right down to the serious point of issue, we must admit that the increasing valuation placed upon young men in business and professional life renders old age a precarious season for many of our fellow men. New Zealand has met the emergency by its system of old-age pensions.

Personally, we may have little to do with solving this question on its economic side, but we ought to maintain the true perspective. Old age need not necessarily be a drug in the market. Think of the stored-up wisdom and experience in the minds and hearts of old men whom you know. Young men must fight the battles and do the hard work of the world; but their energy and initiative need to be balanced by the insight, judgment, and conservatism of older men. The world would swing too far and too rapidly toward radicalism were it not for men who have been mellowed, ripened, and broadened by many years of action.

But what can the old man do with himself? Well, he cannot begin all at once

REAL RELIGION

when he is sixty or seventy and say, "I will have a happy and beautiful old age." That desirable status has to be planned for in advance. If the advice, "In time of peace prepare for war," be worth anything, far more valuable is the counsel, "In time of youth prepare for age." Lay up the dollars if you can, so that you will not be dependent upon others; but lay up even more sedulously those inward resources which will alone make life bearable at that season and make your company agreeable to others. You don't wish to be in the class of people who are not wanted by and by. Look well then to your inward resources. See that you keep your mental elasticity, your spiritual susceptibilities. Add day by day to your fund of courage and good cheer. Acquire some reserves of faith and hope and love, on which you can draw when "the grass-hopper becomes a burden."

In other words, as the body ages, let the spirit grow young and strong. There are certain preventives against the aging of the spirit. A man is as old as he feels himself to be in his inmost heart, and not a day older. And one of the best safeguards against the aging of the soul is to wrap it

WHEN IS A MAN OLD?

round with a sense of immortality; the sense that life here merges sooner or later into a life ampler and grander beyond the grave. The statistical difference between youth and age fades away when we think of the years of eternity in comparison with which even the longest earthly life is like the swift passing of a summer's day.

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

MOST of the arguments in behalf of churchgoing begin at the wrong end and pass over the minds and consciences of the persons addressed as water slips from a duck's back. Of course, there is some force in these minor considerations advanced; but tell a man that he ought to go for the sake of his example, and likely as not he will respond: "I am just as good already as many people who go to church, and I don't have to go to church in order to set a good example. Besides, I am not particularly anxious to pose as an example." Or, plead with a man to go in order to help maintain an important institution, and you are apt to have this rejoinder: "Oh, yes! I believe churches are good things in their way, and that society can't get along without them, but I am already supporting the church financially. My wife goes and my children attend the Sunday-school, and I think I am doing my fair share in this way."

To such a man who parries subsidiary arguments, and who in four cases out of

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

five is a self-centered man, the appeal must be based on what seem like purely selfish grounds. Go for your own sake, brother. In the first place, go in order to have a season of quiet where you will not have to carry on conversation or to attend to business or household details or skim through newspapers. Go in order to give your mind a rest from such concerns as engross it during the week. I know wearied mothers and overworked business and professional men who look forward to Sunday morning in the sanctuary as a period of profitable mental quiet.

Go to worship your Creator and the Infinite Father of all mankind. Oliver Wendell Holmes was not a dreamy pietist or a professional advocate of ecclesiasticism, but he said once, "I have in my heart a little plant called reverence. I go to church to have it watered." How long is it since you provided the proper nourishment for your immortal nature; since you lifted your aspiration heavenward? The spiritual spark within you has a hard struggle to live when you overlay and almost smother it with so many material concerns. The hour in church once a week offers at least one chance for the

REAL RELIGION

spiritual in you to assert itself, to move outward in reverence, in adoration toward that Power which broods over all our lives.

Go to church to get food for mind and soul. A famous Massachusetts lawyer once said that it was a mighty poor sermon that didn't hit him somewhere. Surely it is possible to find amid the diversity of pulpit administrations which a modern city offers some prophet or teacher who can interpret helpfully to you the problems of life from the spiritual standpoint; who can reveal the meaning of discipline; who can set you to thinking on the great subjects of the human soul and its relation to its Maker and its fellows. And even if by traveling about you do not find the preacher who exactly suits you, there can hardly fail to be crumbs of instruction and inspiration that will fall into your lap if you will but listen teachably and regularly.

You really can't afford to stay away from church on your own account. A member of the supreme bench in one of our great states said in my hearing the other day that he had passed through a season in earlier years when he pulled away from the Church. He thought he could get as much

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

good by reading books or by wandering on pleasant days through the fields. But as he continued under this delusion, he said he became conscious of a certain moral deterioration, and so because he feared that his character would degenerate, he resumed again the practise of regular churchgoing, and has adhered to it faithfully ever since.

It isn't a question of whether you like the building or the people who run the church, whether you agree in all the particulars with its theology or its ecclesiastical forms. It is a question of your own growth in things true, beautiful, and of good report. Men put forward a multitude of reasons for not going to church. I have read carefully many explanations of their attitude on the part of non-churchgoers, but they all seem to me to be excuses and not reasons. Is there any real valid reason, my brother, aside from ill health or infirmity, why you do not go to church? If so, write and tell me.

THE QUESTION WHY

IN one of his sweetest poems, James Russell Lowell describes his pitiable loneliness when a darling child was taken from him. One of the verses in which he voices his dissatisfaction with the ordinary explanation of trouble is this:

“Your logic, my friend, is perfect,
Your moral most dreadfully true;
But, since the earth clashed on her coffin,
I keep hearing that, and not you.”

One has some such feeling as this when he reads many of the sermons and articles that have sought to interpret the meaning of any terrible catastrophe. Most of them leave you still asking why, why, why?

In a group of distinguished scholars a conversation once turned upon this question of mystery connected with the divine rulership of the world. One man after another sought to contribute what light he could, until it became the turn of the oldest and most revered among them, the president of a leading theological seminary, to speak. All he said was, “Gentlemen, we might

THE QUESTION WHY

as well confess that God does a great many things that man could not conscientiously do." He meant that if a man were in charge of the universe, and had all power committed to him, he would not permit the things to happen that are allowed to happen every day.

For mystery is an every-day affair. If we can endure and rise above the mysterious dispensations that touch our own lives from time to time, we can probably summon up enough philosophy to meet the great public calamities concerning which the newspapers scatter particulars far and wide. We do not put the question, "Why," for the first time when we read of devastating conflagrations, of engulfing whirlwinds and merciless earthquakes. We put the question, "Why," whenever we hear of a fair, innocent, promising child taken suddenly, or by the slow working of disease, from life; or whenever a young man just through his studies, on the verge of great usefulness in the world, goes insane; or whenever the father and wage-earner in a large family dependent upon him suffers a maiming accident; or whenever sickness or death strikes, as it seems to love to do, a shining mark; or whenever tragedy

REAL RELIGION

stalks in one form or another into a familiar and beloved circle of dear ones. We are saying why nearly all the time, if we have any degree of sensitiveness to the sorrows, the woe, and despair of our fellow men; and if we can give an answer to the question in one case, we probably can in all.

But the fact is, there is no answer — at least none that entirely resolves the mystery or satisfies both the demands of the reason and the instincts of the heart. Better for us is it to admit that we are in a world for whose behavior we are not expected to give a totally satisfactory accounting. We did not make this world and there are limits to our responsibility for it; and yet we may be sure of at least three things. First, that it is, on the whole, a good world. Otherwise the number of suicides would exceed the number of those who die a natural death. The way in which men cling to life, even though they know little but poverty and trouble, is proof that the great majority of mankind regard life as a boon.

Another certainty is that human sympathy, the best thing that passes between man and man, would never exist were it not for trouble and sorrow.

THE QUESTION WHY

One more thing is certain — trouble works out beneficent results in the field of character, provided one does not rebel and complain. The world is educated and disciplined by world tragedies. The individual is purified and ennobled by bitter experiences. So long as the most perfect Character that has ever walked this earth was called upon to endure the tragedy of the cross, not only at the end of his life, but all the way through, we who were cast in a lesser mold, who own ourselves far from perfection, ought not to complain when the knife cuts into our flesh or the scourge is laid upon our backs.

The reason can give no answer to the question, "Why," but faith, instead of being discomfited and vanquished, is braced and made more robust by every encounter with mystery, for faith takes into account two great factors — God and the future life. And because it rests profoundly on these realities, faith sings on, even though the storm may roar without.

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO WHEN THEY DIE?

“**M**AMMA, where do people go when they die?” This question, which springs to the lips of almost every child as soon as it begins to think at all, is still with us and still unanswered. What would not that merchant prince who lost the other day the beloved companion of many years give for an answer? How quickly and eagerly that young mother who has just laid her baby away in the grave would fare forth across the seas to distant lands if she there could find out where her darling is today! But no sphinx or oracle discloses the secret. And I am not so foolish as to think I can give anything like a definite or satisfying answer, but certain beliefs, or if you prefer to call them hopes, are crystallizing into convictions in my mind and they bear upon the underlying problem and illuminate it to some extent.

One is that the dead are somewhere. The very form of this age-long question implies that. One asks instinctively about

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO?

the person who has just stopped breathing, not "Why has he ceased to be?" but "Where has he gone?" That strong, commanding spirit who only recently was the most vigorous among us must still be somewhere. In the early days of this country when people emigrated from New England to the distant West, relying solely on emigrant wagons, their friends who bade them good-bye knew that they might not hear from the travelers for months, perhaps not for years, but they did not on that account think of them thereafter as non-existent. The long wait for us who have lost friends by death, the awful silence seems sometimes unbearable, but the greatest wrong we can do ourselves or them is to think of them as anything but living, growing, developing souls somewhere in God's universe.

And they are doubtless better off. The apostle Paul thought so, at any rate, and he seems to have had special information on the matter. When we consider the physical and the moral risks to which a human being is subject in this imperfect world from babyhood to old age, when we reflect upon the contagion of disease, the liabilities to accident, the inherited maladies, the pitfalls

REAL RELIGION

in the path of him who would be good, when we think of man's inhumanity to man and the large domains of life where cruelty, tyranny, and lust still hold sway, we can at least hope and expect that the "other room" into which God takes his children, one by one, is free from some of the evils that blight this earth and that there the average soul is freer, happier, and holier. Certainly all the evolutionary processes and tendencies at work in this present world look as if they made for something better and higher hereafter. Helen Hunt voiced this faith in the sweet poem beginning,

"Mother, I see you with your nursery light,
Leading your babies all in white,
To their sweet rest;
Christ, the good Shepherd, carries mine to-night,
And that is best."

But how about rewards and punishments? How about the sharp divisions? Well, there are divisions here and it is forever true that a man to be happy in heaven must have a heavenly mind. There is solemn truth in the reply which a wise man made to the flippant question, "Where does all the sulphur in the infernal regions come from?" "Each man," said he, "brings his own."

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO?

The place where people go when they die is determined not by a harsh, powerful despot, but by a loving personal will and the degree to which a human being has brought his life into conformity with it.

THE ONE-LEGGED BOY'S THANKFULNESS

THE Sunday-school teacher thought it would be a capital idea on the Sunday before Thanksgiving to ask his class of bright boys what each had to be thankful for. So he passed around paper and pencils and in due time the replies came back. One lad was thankful that he had made the football team, another for his good home, a third for his new bicycle, but the answer that touched the teacher most deeply came from the one-legged boy in the corner who wrote simply, "I am thankful for one good leg."

One good leg! that represented what he had saved out of the accident. It was more precious to him than his two legs had been prior to the time that he fell under the train. For with the one leg left to him he had been able by sheer pluck, and with the aid of a crutch, to get about among his mates somewhat as before, to go to school again, to have a little share in the sports, to

THANKFULNESS

earn a little money. Why, that one leg stood in his thought for everything worth having! It symbolized independence, education, the power of locomotion, the possibility of attaining noble and useful manhood by and by. No wonder that he grasped his pencil firmly and wrote quickly, "I am thankful for one good leg."

Who are the happiest people on Thanksgiving Day, when the turkey comes steaming in? Not necessarily those who have the most abundant menus, the most sumptuous homes. The happiest people will be those who have learned the real worth of the things which they possess. And sometimes we have to be deprived of half of our blessings in order to appreciate the half that is left. When satisfactions and delights pour in upon us in a golden and continuous stream we are liable to accept them as a matter of course, to underrate each separate mercy, to forget entirely the source of all prosperity and happiness. A wealthy manufacturer was telling me the other day how he had lavished gifts and advantages upon his two daughters from their childhood to their present college days. "And yet," he went on to say, "mother and I sometimes

REAL RELIGION

think they don't care half so much for a diamond necklace even, as she and I, when we were young and poor, cared for the trinkets given us."

We almost need to lose a leg, some of us, to get our eyes open to what it means to have a share in the normal, the average boons granted to the human family. And not every one who loses a leg actually or metaphorically takes the deprivation as philosophically and cheerfully as this boy did. As families gather all over the land for the annual festival of Thanksgiving, in many a home there will be a vacant chair or some other token of loss. But is it the hour for mourning over what was and is no more, or is it a manlier thing to look about and take account over what is left? How rich your life still is in friends and kindred, in external comfort and ease, in inward capacities and hopes, in opportunities for retrieving the mistakes of the past and for more tender loving of the dear ones whose presence still irradiates your home!

Blessings on thee, thou cheerful, thankful, one-legged boy! We will think like you not of the things which we have lost or which we lack, but of the many mercies still vouch-

THANKFULNESS

safed us, and we will join in repeating that little stanza of Robert Burns,

“Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat;
Sae let the Lord be thankit.”

THE GOOD-WILL COMPANY UNLIMITED

WHAT kind of a world would this be if the Christmas spirit pervaded fifty-two weeks of the year instead of a single week or two as at present? We are all pretty well disposed toward one another and mankind in general during the holidays. Whether compelled by precedent or the prevailing custom or because of the good-will resident in our hearts we think of the other fellow and spend time, thought, and money on him.

For many people Christmas would cease to be Christmas if it meant only getting presents from other people. Last Christmas I watched two small children as they secreted themselves from the rest of the family and applied themselves industriously to cutting and pasting, to drawing and sewing, all for the sake of the people whom they love and to whom they wanted to give, by the dozen, things that their own little hands had made. And these are not exceptional

GOOD-WILL COMPANY

children. It is not true that either little people or grown-up people are piggish in their disposition, at least the majority of them.

The sweetest of all exhibitions of good-will during the Christmas season have been those instances of reparation for wrongs or hurts inflicted. Christmas ought to be the time of all the year when the balm of good-will is poured over the sores and gashes made either by wilfulness or thoughtlessness. We ought not to let the season go by without sending some little token, a modest gift, a pretty card, a letter that shall assure any one from whom we may have become estranged, if ever so little, that we intend to do all in our power to restore the old relationship.

But if good-will at this time triumphs over our self-centeredness, why may it not be an active force throughout the year? It is not so today — the more's the pity! You start out in the morning and you cannot bank upon other people's thoroughgoing good-will toward you. You accost a stranger with a polite request for information and the chances are only even that he will give it graciously and as if it were a privilege

to him to serve any passer-by. You go to the butcher's to buy your dinner or to the tailor's to buy your garment and you cannot be sure that the man with whom you trade is as anxious for you to get a good bargain as to make one himself. You meet people socially and their polite inquiries as to your health may grow out of a deep interest in all that affects you or they may be purely perfunctory. So all through the day you realize that you are in a world where every man is first of all looking out for himself and for other people only incidentally and infrequently, if at all.

But picture a world in which there will be an unlimited and constantly operating supply of good-will. Instead of feeling that a good many persons were against you and a great many persons indifferent to you, you would be gladly conscious that everybody was on your side; that, from the newsboy up to the millionaire every one with whom you might be thrown in contact was earnestly seeking your welfare. You would be living in a world of brothers. You would be free from suspicion that any one was trying to "do you," or hurt you, and you would never lack sympathy and succor.

GOOD-WILL COMPANY

Won't you take a little stock, yourself, in the Good-Will Company, Unlimited? Won't you help to translate the angels' song into concrete, every-day, far-reaching good-will?

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK

EASTER is something more than the signal of the calendar for the putting on of new finery. Easter is something more than a joyous springtime festival in honor of the return of the flowers and the birds. It is something more than the proclamation to the world of an abstract theory or a vague hope of immortality. If Easter meant nothing more, the churches would not be crowded and there would be no universal chorus of rejoicing rolling up to heaven in many different languages the world around.

The heart of Easter is the belief that One came back from the dead. Here is the ceaseless procession of humanity from the creation to the present man going down to the grave. They have been dropping, they are dropping every minute, every second. As we speak these words still others have stepped over into the land of shadows. And from that bourn no traveler e'er returns. No one? But this is Easter Day and the time of all times to assert that some One, out of all the myriads who traveled

MAN WHO CAME BACK

that solitary and inevitable path, who went down into that narrow house appointed for all the children of men, some One who died as other men die, save that his death was more cruel and tragic, came back after a sojourn in the grave, the possessor of even ampler life than he had before his flesh saw corruption.

Prove it! comes the imperative challenge. Nay, exacting critic, do not hold us to mathematical demonstration. We cannot prove it as we can prove that the three angles of a triangle equal two right angles or that water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. Our argumentation relates to a realm quite distinct from the physical sciences. And it is not so much precise logic that tells here as certain powerful considerations. If you are willing to proceed gently, quietly, realizing that the most precious interests of mankind are at stake, we believe that you may become as sure of the fact that some One once came back as you are of the existence of your own spirit, of your wife's love for you, of the inexorable demands of duty upon your life.

This much must in candor be conceded, that if any life the world has ever known

deserved to go on after death it was the life that so many of us believe did go on. Somehow the thought of death seems foreign to a nature that had such a genius for life. Death might hold it for a few hours, but the vital forces must have quickly asserted themselves. As the Scripture puts it, "It was not possible for Him to be holden of death." That rich, affluent, radiant life, at once so human and so divine, would be the kind of life for which any reasonable God in any rational universe would provide a practically continuous existence, save for that brief experience of death which for other purposes of the Divine Mind it was necessary for him to undergo.

Add to this antecedent probability the fact that those who once knew him best believed, despite their first doubts, that he had arisen, the fact that the Christian Church and the Christian Sabbath are undeniable monuments of faith in his resurrection, and the fact that millions throughout these nineteen centuries and millions to-day of the truest, noblest souls believe that he is alive, and you have another great support for your faith that he really did come back.

MAN WHO CAME BACK

This is what makes our Easter glorious. It does not explain many things we would like to have cleared up — why no other departed spirits have ever come back, to our certain recognition, why we of ordinary mold can yet hope to attain a personal resurrection. But the sure return of one Man, even though it happened nearly two thousand years ago, is evidence of the persistence of life after death and suggests, if it does not absolutely demonstrate, the continuance of all who, like him, dwell habitually in the presence of God and make it their aim to be well pleasing unto him.

THE CHARM OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

IT is such a fine watchword for the beginning of another twelve months. Would that we all could come during the opening days of every new year within the influence and under the spell of the Impossible! What a difference it may make to us and to others with whom we shall have to do all through this coming year!

Take it first in the region of individual habit. As we look back over our pathway thus far we see the wrecks of many good resolutions and heroic but spasmodic endeavors. And still, some of the objectionable habits against which we have waged fitful warfare persist. Indeed, their grip upon us may be stronger than a year ago. "I can never get rid of it," you say. But wouldn't you like to be free? "Of course." Well, then, indulge for a moment in the luxury of thinking of the impossible as the possible. Act for today, at least, as if you were free from your disability, whatever it may be—the habit of stooping when

CHARM OF IMPOSSIBLE

you ought to walk erect, slavery to a cigar or a cup of coffee, procrastination, tardiness, censoriousness, despondency, the habit of living beyond your means, jealousy, envy, avariciousness. This is but a partial list of the things that are a blemish on character, and maybe your particular fault is not mentioned, but you know it, or ought to know it, and here, at the turning of the year, you may decide to make short shrift of it in time to come.

Then there is also for every one of us the charm of the fresh endeavor to attain heights hitherto unscaled and which seem to stretch far up into the clouds. There was a bright story in a magazine not long ago of a Japanese young man in this country who was bent on becoming a musician. He had not a particle of native ability and the teachers at the Conservatory of Music, where he applied for instruction, soon found out his limitations and tried to dissuade him, but it was no use. He had plenty of money and unlimited self-confidence and ambition. So, despite rebuffs, he worked away persistently, cheerfully, and in the long run to some good effect. "What are you going to do," asks the author of the story in con-

clusion, "with a race characterized by this indomitable determination?"

A young lady applied for a position in the office of a friend of mine. He was pleased with her and after outlining the duties expected she would at once accept, but she hesitated, and when he asked why she replied, "There does not seem to be anything particularly hard about the position." Noble souls want to throw themselves against the hard, the heroic, the impossible propositions in the line of personal achievement.

We should feel the charm of the impossible in its relation to the betterment of this world. "Oh," you say, "we shall never get rid of poverty or sickness or discontent or strife between classes and between races. We shall never have entire honesty in business or peace in every home and heart." A counsel of despair is this. Once at a Lake Mohonk conference in the interest of oppressed people, some one spoke of a certain proposed policy as impossible of realization. Instantly the late General Armstrong, the founder of Hampton Institute, the great school for the blacks in Virginia, sprang to his feet and said, "What are Christians in the world for unless to do the impossible?"

CHARM OF IMPOSSIBLE

Behold, then, on the opening days of a new year the beauty, the fascination, the glory of the Impossible. For if you look at it long enough and steadily enough and sympathetically enough, it will melt into the Possible and then into the Feasible and then, perhaps before this year ends, into the Actual.

THE MAN YOU MIGHT BE

MANY men, most men in fact, stop just short of being their best selves. That is the pathos of human life. We have in every community a fair supply of amiable, intelligent, interesting, respectable men and women. There is a vast deal of kindness and of goodness in the world, filtering constantly from one life to another. But along with it we find life after life which just fails of attaining its largest development and usefulness. One of the most painful things I ever heard said about a human being was the remark of a keen critic concerning an attractive and versatile young woman that "she just misses being an extremely nice girl." He meant that with all her brilliancy and virtue there was the absence of a certain, perhaps indefinable, but real trait that would have made her a charming and altogether lovable creature.

The cause of such arrested moral and spiritual development is not far to seek. Often the secret of it is the comparatively low and sordid ends to which a man is

MAN YOU MIGHT BE

devoting God-given talent and strength. In commenting upon a prominent American who died not long ago, one of our comic papers, noted for its frequent flashes of wisdom as well as of wit, said sapiently, "He was a first-class man with a second-class career." It meant that barring a brief but extremely creditable period of public service he had given himself to the amassing of wealth and to the selfish enjoyment of it when it was in him to do large and chivalrous service for his fellow men, to lead some great reform movement in politics, to apply his undoubted intellectual ability and his rare capacity for influence over others, to the solution of some of our pressing national problems. But he preferred the pleasure arising from the manipulation of great business interests and the joys of society and of his clubs. He was not quite ready for the moral struggle and sacrifice essential to becoming his best possible self.

On the other hand, it is reassuring to see how men both in public and in private life, instead of deteriorating as they age, actually grow better. A prominent minister who attended a while ago the twenty-fifth reunion

REAL RELIGION

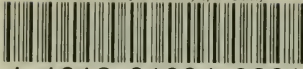
of his college class told me that the thing which impressed him most was the fact that almost every one of his classmates seemed to have improved in the quarter of a century since graduation. The same process may occasionally be observed in the political realm.

No one becomes his best self unless he feels upon his life the push of some great, ennobling force from without. In some cases a great and growing sympathy with the rightful demands of the wage-earning class makes a man cherishing it grow constantly nobler to his dying day. To others some wrong to be redressed or some worthy propaganda is the motive force in the spiritual advance. And to still others, and there is a multitude of these, it is the imperatives, the restraints, and the inspirations of religion that furnish the impulse to the realizing of that which is best in them.

The man you might be is not so very far away from you today. It needs only a little more continuous, strenuous endeavor to mount up to him. Oh, to have a vision of the man we might be, the man we ought to be, the man we can be!



Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01004 9361